REPORT

OF THE

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SELECT COMMITTEE

APPOINTED TO

EXAMINE INTO THE CONDITION OF TENANT HOUSES

IN

NEW-YORK AND BROOKLYN.

With respects
A. M. Smith

Transmitted to the Legislature March 9, 1857.

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IN ASSEMBLY, MAR. 9, 1857.

REPORT

Of the Select Committee appointed to examine into the condition of Tenant Houses in New-York and Brooklyn.

To the Honorable, the House of Assembly of the State of New-York:

The resolution appointing the special committee on tenant houses, passed in Assembly March 3d, 1856, with its preamble, was framed as follows, and submitted by Mr. John M. Reed:

"*Whereas*, Complaints have been made as to the manner in which buildings known as 'tenant houses,' in the city of New-York, have been and are being constructed; that the same are often carried to a great height, without proper regard to the strength of the foundation walls; that said buildings are cut up into small apartments, which have very little ventilation; that the halls or passage-ways through said buildings are unproportionately narrow, and not constructed with proper care to the safety and lives of tenants; that these houses are mostly filled with the poorer class of persons, hundreds of whom are often crowded into a single building, without any means of egress in case of fire or sudden alarm, except through a single narrow passage; therefore,

"*Resolved*, That a committee consisting of five members of this House be appointed to make an examination of the manner in which "tenant houses" are constructed in the city of New-York,

and report the same to the Legislature; and also, if any, what legislation is requisite and necessary to remedy the evils and afford full protection to the lives and health of the occupants of such dwellings."

Subsequently, by resolution, the committee were directed to extend their investigation to "tenant houses" in the city of Brooklyn.

In accordance with the above, the committee visited New-York, and convened their first meeting at the mayor's office of that city, on Friday, March 14, 1856, when they heard preliminary testimony given by citizens, landlords, agents, builders, etc., on the subject under scrutiny. Among others called upon for information at this and subsequent meetings, were ex-alderman Blunt, alderman Wm. Tucker, Mr. Green, President of the Workingmen's Home Association; C. J. Folsom, agent for tenant-house property; Messrs. Webb, Stevens, Phillips and other builders, owners, agents, the city inspector of New-York city, chief of the Sanitary Bureau, health wardens of various wards, and other citizens interested in the subject of proposed reforms in the tenant-house system. The mass of information elicited by discussion with those parties will be found in annotations to the secretary's report accompanying this, much of the cumbrous categorical formula through which it was obtained being thus dispensed with.

After several meetings of the committee for discussion, it was deemed proper, by suggestion and counsel of the New-York municipal authorities, to proceed to a *thorough, personal inspection* of tenant houses in every ward in the city.

In pursuance of this plan, requisition for assistance and police protection was made upon the mayor and the city inspector, and promptly responded to by the tender, on the part of those high officials, of every facility for investigation at their disposal.

Captains of police of various districts, and health wardens of different wards, were at once placed at the disposition of the committee, as guides and safeguards in the survey, and the valuable assistance of Mr. Richard Downing, chief of the Sanitary Bureau, was offered by that gentleman in person, his presence and experience thereafter contributing much to the thoroughness and success of the examination.

The committee, in three days of the time appropriated to their first visit, and in four days of their second, during the month of March, 1856, made tours of those districts which had been reported as presenting the salient features of general evils connected with the tenant-house system.

Accompanied by reporters for the daily press, they penetrated to localities and witnessed scenes which, in frightful novelty, far exceeded the limit of their previously-conceived ideas of human degradation and suffering. Each step made seemed to tread upon new fields of repulsive research; each startling fact of *misery* revealed was speedily paralelled by some close-following example of a kindred *vice* or *crime*, until the conclusion forced itself upon the reflection of all, that certain conditions and associations of human life and habitation are the prolific parents of corresponding habits and morals.

The examinations pursued during the two series of inspections made while the Legislature was in session, were necessarily hurried, because of the late day at which the committee were appointed to act. In submitting a partial report, with general results arrived at, in Assembly, April 4th, 1856, the committee dwelt upon this fact, and asked leave to extend the investigation through the recess of the Legislature, then on the eve of adjournment. At the same time the following propositions were laid down as covering the practical results to be secured by ultimate legislative action, to be based upon further investigation:

1st. An enactment against permitting the renting of under ground apartments or cellars as tenements.

2d. Regulations as to the building of halls and stairways in houses occupied by more than three families, so as to insure easy egress in case of fire.

3d. The prevention of prostitution and incest, by providing that only a sufficient number of rooms, or a room properly divided into separate apartments, shall be rented to families, and by prohibiting sub-letting.

4th. The prevention of drunkenness, by providing for every man a clean and comfortable home.

In concluding their report of progress made, the committee submitted to the House of Assembly the following resolution:

"*Resolved*, That the special committee appointed to examine into the condition of tenant houses in New-York and Brooklyn, have power to extend their operations during the recess of the Legislature, so far as is necessary to enable them to perfect some plan of reform, and to prepare a bill for the consideration of the next House of Assembly."

In the hurry and disorder which marked the concluding sessions of the Assembly of 1856, no provision was made for the extension of the committee's labors; but, so impressed were its members with the importance of thorough inquiry and speedy legislation in the matter, they resolved to continue the investigation at their own personal expense, in order that the results of their preliminary labors might not be lost, and that future action might be taken to decrease the expanding evil complained of.

After adjournment of the Legislature, therefore, this committee, in conjunction with the health committees of the New-York board of aldermen and common council, continued their explorations through the summer months, penetrating the most unhealthy neighborhoods, and comparing poverty, filth and disease, as influenced by the hot season, with the condition of the same as witnessed during the severe cold of the previous winter.

In performing this arduous, painful, and as may be conjectured, *hazardous* duty, the committee have been controlled by the single desire of presenting facts as they exist, and eliminating such sound and necessary information as may serve to index proper legislation and guide its details

Whether, for the time and expense which they have freely devoted to the work, they shall be deemed worthy of reimbursement, is left with the wisdom of the honorable Assembly; but they remain conscious of having performed their duty thoroughly and successfully, and beg leave to ask earnest attention to the facts and deductions embodied in a detailed report from Mr. Duganne, secretary of the committee, which is herewith submitted.

This report is the result of a resolution passed at a stated meeting of the committee, after a succession of laborious and scrutinizing tours and domiciliary visits, during previous months :

"*Resolved*, That A. J. H. Duganne, act as secretary of this investigating committee of tenant houses, and that he be authorised

and delegated as a sub-committee, to prepare a REPORT to be submitted to this committee, (at the final meeting) before presentation to the Legislature."

Agreeably to this resolution, the subjoined report was received from Mr. Duganne, at the final meeting of the committee, and is now, together with a bill embodying legislative action, to remedy the various evils therein developed, submitted to Hon. the House of Assembly.

In conclusion, this committee would respectfully recommend immediate action upon this important subject; convinced that the adoption of such measures as are recited in the bill will constitute such supervisory authority and lead to such ameliorating private action as will preclude the necessity of passing statutes imposing sumptuary restrictions upon the people in the matter of building their houses.

With a provident commission, specially charged with the care and improvement of tenant houses, their occupants and surroundings, the heart of the evil may be reached and the spread of the worst features checked at once.

Respectfully,

JOHN M. REED,
A. J. H. DUGANNE,
ELI CURTIS,
WM. J. SHEA,
SAMUEL BREVOORT.

REPORT.

Gentlemen of the Legislative Committee :

The duty imposed by your resolution, confiding to me the preparation of a report, imbodying the details of our combined investigations into the condition of tenant houses, in New-York and Brooklyn, has been performed with mingled sorrow and satisfaction; sorrow in the reflection that such harrowing facts of human misery as we have witnessed should be coupled with the records of christian communities, and satisfaction in the hope that our labor may be the forerunner of legislation which shall decrease in some degree the evils now made public.

In the prosecution of our researches, scenes have been encountered that, if portrayed in the pages of romance, might be regarded as creations of diseased fancy, but which, noted down by the matter-of-fact pen of statistical inquiry, may serve to awaken public attention to stern and stubborn truths. In this report, therefore, in order to present a faithful view of the tenant house system, as now existing, I have felt it necessary to discuss matters which, while they are closely connected with its workings, are at the same time such as indicate a sweeping field of social reform.

It is true that a scrupulous adherence to the exact area of investigation, designated by the letter of that resolution which appointed the commission, would have limited our scrutiny to the modes of construction and general sanitary condition of New-York and Brooklyn* tenant houses, a labor which, though of great necessity, could not comprise in its results a proper understanding

*In the several visits made to Brooklyn, the committee did not encounter the degradation and misery so common in New-York city, and in the last inspections, indeed, much improvement was noticed. Brooklyn is as yet but measurably afflicted with the tenant house system, as it exists in older cities; and with salutary municipal regulations, may prevent with ease, the introduction of its worst features, as dwelt upon in the progress of this report.—*Minutes of Investigation.*

of all the merits of this most important subject. Ignorant, like the majority of their fellow citizens, of the actual and terrible evils which underlie the social structure, incredulous regarding such fragmentary revelations of misery as had come to their previous knowledge, and disposed, in fact, to consider much that was related concerning the condition of our poorest classes, as over-wrought pictures of distorted sympathy,—our committee could not, in their primary labors, contemplate the magnitude nor realise the description of social disorder which their investigation was destined to develope too plainly. Though expecting to look upon poverty in squalid guise, vice in repulsive aspects, and ignorance of a degraded stamp, we had yet formed no adequate conception of the extremes to which each and all of these evils could reach, nor of the intimate relationship existing between them and the dwellings, localities and neighborhoods where they abound. In fine, we were to learn practically the truth of that theory which involves the health, virtue and general well-being of a people, with its methods, means and manner of living.

The possibility that habits and surroundings might have power to act for good or ill upon certain classes of society, furnished hints for philanthropic research many years ago. Exploration into the habits of life, average mortality, diseases, and other physical characteristics peculiar to the extreme poor of London, Paris, Berlin and other capitals of Europe, begat observation of the moral endemics of that stratum of society; of the crimes, vices, and general obliquity or obtuseness of the religious or worshiping element, indigenous to particular quarters; of the mental faculties brought mostly into use or abuse; and, finally, of the influence, positive and negative, exercised by such social integers upon the physical and moral health of the whole body politic. The subject was fruitful as interesting, and, so far as developed, provides a basis for philosophic comparison that may hereafter result in a new system of social ethics, considering the individual in his relation to elements, attractions, privileges or restrictions surrounding him as child and man.

It is a law of nature, applicable to society as to physics, that continued disorder must result in ultimate destruction. In the social as the human system, symmetry is an essential of health; for if any portion of either be antagonistic to another, if in any part a derangement of natural action takes place, the entire system must speedily experience injury, and decay inevitably supervene.

When the body of a man is robust and healthy it can bear exposure and hardship, enduring with impunity the winter's cold and summer's heat; for its unobstructed currents, unclogged secretions, and quiet, assimilating processes oppose impurity, repair losses and nourish growth and strength. On the other hand, when some constituent deteriorates, and its dependencies lose elasticity; when, for example, nerve or artery, tissue or cuticle, lungs or brain is injuriously affected, disease obtains entrance, the system sympathises, and decay, if not checked, will be rapid and fatal. Society is but an aggregation of individual organs or existences; its life and health governed by like laws, affected by like influences. As the child is father of the man, so is the individual an antetype of the State.

To apply, then, the laws of order, compensation, and symmetric action to the demands of social existence, would seem to be a primary duty of the political philanthropist. In the divine economy no discordance is apparent, because no conflicting interests exist, and hence the forces of nature work out their beautiful developments with the symmetric certainty of immutable law. The grand procession of constellations, the perpetual alternation of day and night, the unvarying recurrence of seed-time and harvest, the march of seasons, with blossoms and flowers, fruitage and russet leaves, attest a unity of purpose which, in itself, proclaims the Deity. On the other hand, it is because our social structures too often lack the essential laws of proportion and assimilation—the adaptedness of parts to each other and to the whole—it is, in effect, because society would escape from obedience to the order which governs nature and individual man—that the political economist encounters such startling problems, the philosopher such perplexing inequalities, the christian such mournful examples of misery and sin. "Great cities," it has been said, "are great sores," but why they should necessarily be such excrescences upon the body of created things is a subject of legitimate inquiry. Man is gregarious in his nature, yearning for neighborhood and companionship. Benevolent theorists, in all ages, have not failed to picture their symmetric civic structures, in which noble cities, brilliant with all the luxuries of refined architecture, and lovely with all the contrivances of well-directed wealth, made up the fore ground; and even sacred writ, in its exalted ideas of futurity, has coupled the forms of earthly splendor with the more spiritual excellences of a New Jerusalem. It might, then, be conjectured that cities

ought not to be invariably doomed to association with all that is vile and repulsive in worldly habitation, but that, on the contrary, they may and should be the abodes of intelligent comfort, if not of intellectual and moral beatitude. Indeed, if desolate nature, with its isolation from all appliances requisite for the necessities of civilized man, be symbolical of savage or barbarous life, surely its extreme opposite, if measured by an ascending scale of progressive comfort, ought to be sought in a society where the accessibility of every means of human enjoyment amounts almost to commonness; where merchandry brings its lavish treasures, art her priceless products, luxury its profusion, and industry its unnumbered fruits. Yet here, in reality, where pleasure wreathes perennial flowers, and magnificence runs wild with varied forms; here, in sad refutation of utopian speculation, the leper crouches in dumb despair, the beggar crawls in abject misery, the toiler starves, the robber prowls, and the tenant-house—home of all these outcast human beings—rises in squalid deformity, to mock civilization with its foul malaria, its poison-breeding influences, its death-dealing associations.

Yet, indeed, as if providence in permitting such aggregation of human suffering, in classes and localities, designed in its inscrutable wisdom to index proper channels wherein humanity might exercise its benign attributes; there is offered, through this very distinctiveness of the tenant house system, a means of ameliorating the condition of our poorer fellow beings, of directing their physical habits and improving their moral nature. The tenant house, with its pariah inhabitants, presents a field of missionary labor which, beginning at material necessities, may extend its influence to higher wants, in educational and religious points of view.

The tenant house is the offspring of municipal neglect, as well as of its primary causes, over population and destitution. As a city grows in commerce, and demands new localities for traffic and manufacture, the store and workshop encroach upon the dwelling house and dispossess its occupants. At first the habitations of citizens are removed to a limited distance, because, with an industrious population, time is money, and neighborhood of residence and business secures both economy and convenience. The merchant and master, then, find it for their interest to dwell in the vicinity of their active operations; and so, likewise, do the mechanic, laborer, and all dependent on business life. It is at

this stage of a community's growth that proper regulations and restrictions, looking to the ultimate well-being of the city, are of paramount necessity; and herein the authorities of former years were unmindful of future public good, precisely as we, in our day and generation, are pertinaciously regardless of our posterity's welfare. Had the evils which now appal us, been prevented or checked in their earlier manifestation, by wise and simple laws, the city of New-York would now exhibit more gratifying bills of health, more general social comfort and prosperity, and less, far less expenditure for the support of pauperism and punishment of crime.

But legislation interposed not in its proper season, and hence the system of tenant-house leasing was soon begotten of the wants of poverty. As our wharves became crowded with warehouses, and encompassed with bustle and noise, the wealthier citizens, who peopled old "Knickerbocker" mansions, near the bay, transferred their residence to streets beyond the din; compensating for remoteness from their counting houses, by the advantages of increased quiet and luxury. Their habitations then passed into the hands, on the one side, of boarding house keepers, on the other, of real estate agents; and here, in its beginning, the tenant house became a real blessing to that class of industrious poor whose small earnings limited their expenses and whose employment in workshops, stores, or about the wharves and thoroughfares, rendered a near residence of much importance. At this period, rents were moderate, and a mechanic with family could hire two or more comfortable and even commodious apartments, in a house once occupied by wealthy people, for less than half what he is now obliged to pay for narrow and unhealthy quarters. This state of tenantry comfort did not, however, continue long; for the rapid march of improvement speedily enhanced the value of property in the lower wards of the city, and as this took place, rents rose, and accommodations decreased in the same proportion. At first the better class of tenants submitted to retain their single floors, or two and three rooms, at the onerous rates, but this rendered them poorer, and those who were able to do so, followed the example of former proprietors, and emigrated to the upper wards. The spacious dwelling houses then fell before improvements, or languished for a season, as tenant houses of the type which is now the prevailing evil of our city; that is to say, their large rooms were partitioned into several smaller ones, (without regard to proper light or ventilation,) the

rates of rent being lower in proportion to space or height from the street; and they soon became filled, from cellar to garret, with a class of tenantry living from hand to mouth, loose in morals, improvident in habits, degraded or squalid as beggary itself. This, in its primary aspects, was the tenant-house system, which has repeated itself, in every phase, as it followed the track of population from ward to ward, until it now becomes a distinguishing feature of our social existence, the parent of constant disorders, and the nursery of increasing vices.

It was soon perceived, by astute owners or agents of property, that a greater percentage of profit would be realized by the conversion of houses and blocks into barracks, and dividing their space into the smallest proportions capable of containing human life within four walls. The fact had become apparent to speculation that, in a climate subject to inclement change, as in the meridian of New-York, it is necessary, even for the poorest people, to dwell within doors and be sheltered by a roof, humble though it may be; so speculation immediately proceeded to provide walls and roof. Blocks were rented of real-estate owners, or purchased on time, or taken in charge at a percentage, and held for underletting to applicants with no ready money and precarious means of livelihood. To such unfortunates it was not difficult to dictate terms or furnish habitations, for to them the mere sufferance of tenancy might appear like benevolence on the part of house-owners. To this class, then, entire blocks of buildings, worn out in other service, were let in hundreds of sub-divided apartments, and rates of rent were established, as well as seasons and modes of payment, which, while affording the wretched tenantry some sort of shelter within their scanty means, secured at the same time prompt payment of weekly dues, and an aggregate of profit from the whole barracks (risks and losses taken in account) of twice or thrice the amount which a legitimate lease of the building to one occupant would bring, if granted for business purposes at the usual rate of real-estate interest.

As no care-taking of premises could be expected from the majority of this class of tenants, collected, or rather herded together thus indiscriminately, the charges for occupancy by the month or week were fixed at a rate which not only covered all risks, and secured exorbitant interest on investment, but left wide margin for damage and abuse, allowing the buildings to decay or fall to pieces as rapidly as constant occupancy would permit. It is true that stipulations were usually made to secure the property from

wanton or wilful demolition by tenants, and provisos to guard against accumulation of filth or insure precautions against accidents by fire, were generally indicated in the terms of contract, but no stringent regulations on the part of landlords, no provisions for the maintenance of health, and no convenience for securing neatness, cleanliness, ventilation or general order and comfort in the establishment, were ever dreamed of in connection with the tenant-house system, as it spread its localities from year to year. It sufficed that conservation of property in the aggregate, and a particular supervision of the rent, remained as distinguishing characteristics of landlord or agent, while on the other hand reckless slovenliness, discontent, privation and ignorance among the tenants were left to work out their invariable results, in the gradual destruction of doors, shutters, windows, fences, ceilings, floors, until the entire premises reached the level of tenant-house dilapidation, containing, but sheltering not, the miserable hordes that crowded beneath mouldering, water-rotted roofs, or burrowed among the rats of clammy cellars.

In this stage of tenancy, the evils of a system which crowds hundreds of human beings into quarters, inferior in comfort and accommodation to the pens of our cattle, appear in flagrant distinctness. An eye-witness describes the scenes customarily encountered in a visit to one of these tenant houses, in the following graphic language: "Poverty in Rome," says the writer, "was said to be the spouse of Content and the mother of Love.* How that may have been we know not, but this we do know, that poverty, as we have seen it in New-York, is wedded to despair, and its offspring is vengeance. It is a shape that sickens the heart with disgust, and chills the blood with horror. Do you think this strong language? Do you intimate that you have been here a score of years and have never been disgusted or horrified by anything of the sort? Do you say that you have never spied it from your window or met it in the street? Talk not of this, doubters, till you have sought out its real habitations and have yourself crossed its threshold. It is to be seen in its real aspect at home, and no where else; and if you have not looked for it there, your doubts are foolishness. We sat down for the purpose of detailing some of our own personal observations of household wretchedness in the fourth and sixth wards of this city, but our taste revolts and our pen shrinks from the narration. We could tell of one room, twelve feet by twelve, in which were five

* From the pen of Mr. Spaulding, of the N.Y. "Courier and Enquirer."

resident families, comprising twenty persons, of both sexes, and all ages, with only two beds, without partition or screen, or chair or table; and all dependent for their support upon the sale of chips gleaned from the streets, at four cents a basket; of another department, still smaller and still more destitute, inhabited by a man, a woman, two girls and a boy, who were supported by permitting the room to be used as a rendezvous by abandoned women of the street; of another, an attic room, seven feet by five, containing scarcely an article of furniture but a bed, on which lay a fine looking man in a raging fever, without medicine, drink or suitable food, his toil-worn wife engaged in cleaning the dirt from the floor, and his little child asleep on a bundle of rags in the corner; of another of the same dimensions, in which we found, seated on low boxes, around a candle, placed on a keg, a woman and her eldest daughter, (the latter a girl of fifteen, and, as we were told, a prostitute,) sewing on shirts, for the making of which they were paid four cents apiece, and even at that price, out of which they had to support two small children, they could not get a supply of work; of another room, about as large, occupied by a street rag picker and his family, the income of whose industry was about eight dollars per month; of another apartment, scarce larger, (into which we were drawn by the screams of a wife beaten by her drunken husband,) containing no article of furniture whatever; of another, warmed only by a tin pail of lighted charcoal, placed in the centre of the floor, over which a blind man bent, endeavoring to warm himself, while three or four men and women were quarreling around him, and in one corner lay the body of a woman who had died the day before of disease, her orphan children sleeping near on a pile of rags; of another room, from which a short time before, twenty persons, sick with fever, had been taken to the hospital to die. But why extend the catalogue? or why attempt to convey to the imagination by words, the hideous squalor and deadly effluvia; the dim, undrained courts oozing with pollution; the dark, narrow stairways, decayed with age, reeking with filth, overrun with vermin; the rotted floors, ceilings begrimmed, and often too low to permit you to stand upright; the windows stuffed with rags? or why try to portray the gaunt, shivering forms and wild ghastly faces, in these black and beetling abodes, wherein, from cellar to garret,

> "All life dies, death lives, and nature breeds
> Perverse, all monstrous, all prodigious things,
> Abominable, unutterable!"

Such is a *general* outline of the "Tenant House." Its details would be revolting in proportion to the minuteness and fidelity

with which they were traced. In the explorations of this Committee, scenes have been encountered trebly harrowing to sensibility, with facts of vice too frightful to dwell upon, too disgusting to reveal. As a Committee, happily, we are to consider the remedies and ameliorations for evils recognized to *exist*, and may be spared, therefore, the recital of much that has passed under our observation, a too close review of which would needlessly harrow up the public mind. Nevertheless, without recapitulation of horrors, we may, in order to present such views of particular localities as a faithful report ought to comprise, recall a few scenes witnessed in the visits of the Committee, during their various and thorough tours of inspection. In recurring to these, it will suffice to designate the more unhealthy and wretched blocks and buildings, of different wards; and in the first place, we may mention what I shall term

RE-CONSTRUCTED TENANT-HOUSES.

These consist mainly of a series of contiguous buildings, or a combination of apartments adapted or re-constructed for tenant purposes within the walls of some large house or public building. Of this class (proceeding from the lower point of New-York city) we came, firstly, to one of inferior dimensions, but with its full proportion of wretchedness, the entrance of which is at 16 Washington-street, in the first ward. This is a three-story building, (owned by an Irish woman residing in Pearl-street;) accessible through a narrow door and steep stairway, ascending over a stable wherein an express company's horses are hept. The dilapidation of this entire building is extreme; its rickety floors shook under the tread, and portions of the wall, black and mildewed, were continually breaking off, whilst nearly every vestige of mortar had disappeared from some of the rooms, leaving only smoke-discolored lathing, through which thick moisture was constantly oozing. A poor woman who occupied an apartment on the second floor complained that this last discomfort was incessant. "The ould ceiling," she said, "is ould as meself, and its full uv the *dhrop* it is;" i. e. it was soaked with water that entered through the broken roof whenever it rained; indeed, the committee were assured, (and from appearances the fact could not be doubted,) that in wet weather the upper floors of this ruinous habitation were completely flooded, and the poor occupants were obliged to move their drenched beds from spot to spot as the dropping became too troublesome to permit sleep. In the rear of this building was another of the same height (three stories), and with a ground

floor of one hundred feet in length to sixteen deep, connecting with the street by two narrow alleys. The decay and dilapidation of the premises was only equalled by the filth of the inhabitants. The number of tenants in both houses was reported as seventy, all Irish. In the front section the rent varied from $2 to $6 per month; in the rear from $6 to $8; rooms dark, narrow and ill ventilated. The price for an apartment, with two small closets, answering for bed-rooms, was $7 per month. The lessee of the premises, who under-let, and was responsible to the proprietor, informed the committee that he paid $1,456 per annum, including taxes. In one of the rooms of the front house, an apartment six by ten feet in area, a widow lived with five children. At 97 Washington-street the Committee visited an old building, three stories high, 18 by 30 feet in area, very much out of repair and extremely filthy. In a cellar beneath rooms were "to let." The first floor was used by the lessee as a sailors' lodging-house, the accommodation of which consisted of bunks, arranged one above another like a ship's lockers. The upper floors were occupied by Irish families, to the height of the garret, which was reached by a kind of ladder. Under the broken and leaky roof three families were crouching, one of which (a woman and child) paid three dollars per month for a portion of the miserable garret; the woman had been obliged to sell her bedstead to meet the rent, and slept with her baby on the floor. The total rent collected from tenants in this house (18 by 30 feet, and three stories) was $90 per month.

At 46 Trinity-place (third ward), in rear of Trinity church, and overlooked by the stained windows of that beautiful edifice, was a tenant-house, which had been altered from a school building; in this house there were fourteen families—in all seventy-six persons—each tenement comprising a room 12 by 14 feet in area, with two bed-rooms, or rather closets, where neither light nor air penetrated. Some of the families inhabiting these premises kept lodgers at one shilling per night. One widow woman had nine men boarding with her, dwelling in the one dining-room and two bed-rooms. In this range of tenements, rear of Trinity church, epidemics have originated on two distinct occasions—the yellow fever, several years since, and, more recently, the cholera. Filth and want of ventilation are enough to infect the very walls with disease.

At No. 51, Worth street, (fifth ward) the Committee inspected a building in the last stages of decay, though two or three wretched families still clung to it. The rear rooms of this ruin,

even with the ground, appear to be abandoned to general filth and excrements. Such a nuisance must sicken a whole neighborhood with its noisomeness.

In Mulberry street, near the "Five Points," (sixth ward,) the Committee examined a large tenant house, in a very dilapidated condition. It had been reconstructed, through its interior, from an old wooden church, once used by the Baptists, and adapted to occupancy in the most careless manner. The sewer connection, serving for the premises, was a four inch pipe, wholly inadequate to the necessary uses of such a conduit. In this establishment there were 85 apartments, containing more than 100 families, and comprising 310 persons. In the basement, entered by shattered steps, the depth below the street level was measured by the Committee, and ascertained to be five feet, two inches. In these vaults, families were dwelling, and paying $3 per month, for their damp and sickly quarters. On the fifth floor of this structure $4.50 per month was paid for apartments. The entire fabric is cased and partitioned with pine boards, its entries and passages dark and cramped, and the walls, floors and roofing of such inflammable materials that, in case of fire in any portion, it would be impossible to arrest its spread. Should such a calamity take place at night, it is more than probable that scores of the unfortunate inmates would perish ere they could find egress through the narrow doors and passages. Yet, in this building, bad as it is, the main entrances are wider than in most of the re-constructed, or even specially-built tenant-houses, one of the latter of which has been erected on the front lots.

At No. 17 Baxter-street, the Committee penetrated through an alley-passage, where the black mud was two inches deep, to a rear entrance under the building; the basement rooms, with floor five and a half feet below the street-level, was occupied as a dance-house and bar-room, the former 27 feet by 16, the latter 13 by 16, for which $13 per month was paid; two beds for lodgers were in the dance-room. The class of basement or cellar lodgers accommodated in such places pay from six-pence to a shilling per night; average number of lodgers to one bed is three, and no distinction is made between male and female. On the upper floors of this tenant-house, twelve families, comprising seventy-five persons, dwelt in twelve apartments; walls damp, rooms dark, passages filthy, and with no sort of ventilation. Rear of these premises was a collection of sheds built of rough

boards, each containing four dark rooms, rent $3 per month, inhabited by poor people who subsisted by the sale of spearmint, which they grew in boxes on the roof, and disposed of to hotels and bar-rooms, a fact which suggested that certain fashionable beverages in vogue might be traced back for their constituents to the malaria and filth of the Five Point tenant-houses. The average rent of rooms in this locality, where are many houses of the same description, is $4 per month.

At the rear of 37½ Baxter-street (ground said to be the lowest in the city) apartments were entered six feet beneath the street level, ceilings barely six feet in height, renting at $4 per month, and on the second story of the house a rear room, with two dark closets, rented for $5 per month, and a front room at $6.50, the latter to a family consisting of an old dame of sixty and two daughters, who supported themselves by picking curled hair sixteen hours per day, the three earning five dollars per week.

At 39 Baxter-street, a rear building, the Committee found fifteen persons living in one room, the height of which, from floor to ceiling, was seven feet, and the floor 15 feet by 14, rent $6 per month. To reach these premises it was necessary to pass through an alley, the widest portion of which was but two feet, the narrowest nineteen inches. In case of fires escape to the street would be a miracle. In the vicinity of this habitation were many other forlorn and squalid houses, let in the same way, at the average price of $7 per month.

REMARKS ON THESE HOUSES.

In this connection it may be mentioned that rear buildings and their surroundings, present, in general, the most repulsive features of the tenant-house system. As business has increased upon the streets, the buildings located favorably for stores have been converted to the use of trade, and the area comprised in the distance intervening, from square to square, generally filled with wooden structures, has been seized upon by the tenant-house speculator. Sometimes a dozen narrow and dark apartments in a single house, but often a collection of mouldy walls, covering a space of from forty to two hundred feet square, with cramped, miserable apartments, scarce fit for dog kennels, may be discovered in the rear of some busy factory in our lower wards, or seen from the windows of a hotel, or overlooked from the roof of a marble store. To reach these tumbling and squalid rookeries, the visitor must sometimes penetrate a labyrinth of alleys, behind horse-stables

blacksmith's forges, and, inevitably, beside cheap groggeries, till he finds himself in a dim close, thick with mephitic gases, and nauseous from the effluvia of decaying matter and pools of stagnant water. This close has been leased for a term of years from the owner, at a stated sum per annum, and the tenements contained in it are dignified by the title of alley, court, lane or avenue. The lessee becomes, by his lease, the agent, middle-man or sub-landlord; he is responsible for the aggregate rent, and must, for self-protection, underlet the premises to the best advantage. He, therefore, calculates to the smallest fraction, all that the speculation is capable of producing him as reimbursement and interest upon his invested risk. He measures the rooms, and estimates —not their capacities for accommodating human life in health and comfort—but their capability of containing human life to pay the rent. For a room twelve feet square and scarcely high enough to permit one's standing upright in it, he estimates that from 75 cents to $1.25 per week should be charged. On this basis, modified by accessibility, gradations of darkness or suffocation, and other essential characteristics of the primary tenant-house, the calculation of aggregate rental is made, and the premises offered to all comers on the sub-landlord's terms.

Sometimes the agent or speculator is owner of a portion of the property; sometimes he depends upon such agencies, or investment, for his entire income, and contrives thereby to live in fashionable style, in up-town quarters, to educate his sons and daughters and leave them snug fortunes. Yet, in fact, he never owns a foot of land nor pays a property tax; inasmuch as all the public rates chargeable to the rows, blocks and single buildings which he leases and of which he collects the rent, are paid through the extortionate charges levied upon the veriest poor; the latter, as a general thing, paying for house rent much more, proportionately and in fact, than is paid by the rich who dwell sumptuously in their avenue palaces.

It might be surmised, from the poverty of the class of tenantry housed in these miserable localities, that the sub-landlord would be a loser from them, but such is found, on inquiry, not to be the fact. On the contrary, it is said, the dues of the very poor are paid with more punctuality than are those of many middle class tenants of the best style of tenant-houses. "The poor must and do pay the rent," said one who gave testimony on the subject. "It is the first thing they think of, and many, as I have myself

witnessed, deny themselves the necessaries of life, that their scanty earnings may suffice to keep a roof above their heads, and this, because they know they are liable, at any moment, to be turned into the street, perhaps, with the loss of their scanty effects. The poor dare not be otherwise than punctual with the rent, even though their children go unshod through the snows, their hearth be destitute of fuel and their clothes be ticketed to the pawnbroker. The rent, sir, must be, and in nine cases out of ten, is met."

But there is no testimony needed as to the lucrativeness of tenant house letting. If property did not pay enormously when occupied in this manner, there would be found very few landlords willing to encounter the risks of disease incident to the collection of rent.

THE RAG-PICKING AND BONE-GATHERING TENANTS.

The lowest of tenant-houses mentioned above, as visited by the Committee in several lower wards, are, as before said, the primary re-constructions or adaptations. In the 8th, 4th, 11th, 13th and other wards, there are many large buildings, or collections of houses, answering to this description. At No. 88 Sheriff street, a rambling row of wooden tenements, called "Rag-pickers' Paradise," was inspected by the Committee. The locality was infected for squares around by the effluvia of putrefying flesh, from numberless bone-boiling places, and bales of filthy rags stored in the cellars and sheds. "Rag-pickers' Paradise" is inhabited entirely by Germans, who dwell in small rooms, in almost fabulous gregariousness, surrounded by scores of dogs, and canopied by myriads of rags fluttering from lines crossing their filthy yards, where bones of dead animals and noisome collections of every kind were reeking with pestiferous smells. One establishment (which is devoted to the same purpose, situated on Third street, and owned by a former member of our State Senate,) contains more than fifty families. Though extreme squalor is apparent to a visitor, the Germans inhabiting these localities appear to be thrifty, and, in their way, comfortable. It is said that habits of economy and constant application to their wretched business enable nearly all, sooner or later, to accumulate sufficient funds to enable them to migrate to the west. We were told of a colony of three hundred of these people, who occupied a single basement, living on offal and scraps, and who saved money enough to purchase a township on one of the western prairies. Nevertheless, their means of livelihood, degraded as it is, is likewise exceedingly precarious,

especially in severe winters, when snow storms, covering the ground, hide the rags, shreds of paper, etc., on the sale of which they subsist. In such seasons, the children are sent out to sweep crossings or beg, and many of the most adroit practitioners on public charity are found among these urchins, who are generally marked by a precocity and cunning, which render them, too often, adepts in vice at the tenderest ages.

The presence and customs of the bone-gathering tenants were made known to the Committee through other senses besides that of vision. In the yards, where ferocious looking dogs greeted the visitors with threatening demonstrations, a number of bags of bones, just brought thither from slaughter-houses, with decaying flesh clinging to them, saluted our nostrils with noxious effluvia. These bones were to be boiled on the premises, and their stench, mingled with the fetid exhalations from wet rags, was to be sent abroad over the neighborhood, thence to ascend and be carried by the wind, with all their deadly particles, to the chambers of sick people and the parlors of wealthy residents upon our avenues. On the wooden piazzas, and choking up the narrow entries, were bags and baskets of calves' heads, offensive with putrid portions of the jowls and bones in every stage of decomposition.

The class of tenants above mentioned, *i. e.*, rag-picking and bone-gathering, have a sort of internal polity, by means of which they preserve an amicable understanding, though competing in the same miserable business. For the purposes of their daily life the city is districted or partitioned into streets and neighborhoods, certain individuals or families being allowed their distinct fields, over the boundaries of which they must not pass, to trespass on another's. The colonies sally out at daybreak with their baskets and pokers, disperse to their respective precincts, and pursue their work with more or less success throughout the day. On their return, the baskets, bags and carts (for some aspire to the convenience of a dog-cart) are emptied into a common heap. Then, from the bones and scraps of meat, certain portions are selected wherewith to prepare soups and ragouts. The rags are separated from the bones and sorted, washed and dried; the bones, after everything that may serve for food has been scraped from them, are boiled, after which rags and bones are sold—the former to adjacent shop-keepers who live by the traffic, at about two cents per pound, and the latter for thirty cents per bushel.

When it is recollected that the process of washing filthy rags, collected from gutters, sinks, hospital yards, and every vile locality imaginable, is conducted in the single apartment used for cooking, eating, sleeping, and general living purposes, by the tenants, (sometimes a dozen in one room) where, furthermore, bone-boiling, with its odors, is a constant concomitant; and where to these horrible practices are superadded the personal filth, stagnant water, fixed air, and confined, dark, and damp holes, all characteristic of the tenant-house system, such as witnessed by the committee in every variety, it is no wonder that these unfortunate people are yearly decimated; it is not strange that the cholera and other epidemics have, as we are told, made frightful havoc among them in past years.*

But we must pass over without description hundreds of dilapidated, dirty and densely populated old structures which the committee inspected in different wards, and which come under the head of re-adapted, re constructed, or altered buildings. In most of them the Irish are predominant, as occupants, though in some streets negroes are found swarming from cellar to garret of tottering tenant houses. In this connection, it may be well to remark, that in some of the better class of houses built for tenantry, negroes have been preferred as occupants to Irish or German poor; the incentive of possessing comparatively decent quarters appearing to inspire the colored residents with more desire for personal cleanliness and regard for property than is impressed upon the whites of their own condition. In one building the committee remarked much neatness and seeming comfort, with not a little evidence of a prolific habit on the part of families which might not have pleased a Malthusian philosopher. In answer to inquiries, and in fact by ocular demonstration, it was ascertained that nearly all the inhabitants were practical amalgamationists—black husbands and white (generally Irish) wives making up the heads of constantly increasing families.†

* Of this class, under the head of "*Chiffoniers,*" the city inspector says in his annual report: "Engaged from early dawn in ferreting among decomposed and fermenting organic matter, putrefying carcases, corrupt waters, and the general mass of accummulated secretions cast into our streets; their collection of offal is carried throughout the city and finally deposited in the vicinity of shanties, or taken into tenement houses or barracks, where every separate door has its own foul vapors, to taint the neighborhood with their effluvia. Can it be doubted that these localities are hot-beds for the propagation and dissemination of disease, or that the noxious stench from them vitiates the surrounding atmosphere? Their utter extirpation from the precincts of the city cannot be too strongly urged.

† In one room was a large negress, apparently about forty years of age, who had four children of various shades; one very black, two mulattoes, and one almost white. The black and mulatto seemed healthy; the one nearly white was feeble and idiotic. In another apartment there were five girls, three black and two white, living together; in the next room an athletic negro was holding a babe, while his wife, or partner—a sickly looking white woman—was feeding another of their offspring.

SPECIALLY BUILT TENANT HOUSES.

The next class of tenant houses which came under notice of the committee, and of which it will suffice to describe a few, are those specially built for the purpose of "holding" poor people. These are constructed, in general, for speculation, in the same manner as cheap and worthless goods are said to be "made to sell." They consist usually of double buildings, the front one, with hall opening from the street or court, and having two suites of rooms from cellar to roof, with windows front and back, and dark bedrooms or closets in the centre; while the rear building, accessible through an alley at the side of the former, is pent within a backyard. Sometimes a lot of ground is built upon, to some distance from the street, penetrating back and forming two alleys or courts, one on each side of the block. Every foot of ground is built upon, and there are no yards, except the space between front and rear houses, where two are erected contiguously. The privies, in many cases, are below the dwelling rooms, in a cellar, or under the sidewalks or pavement; and the stench arising from them ascends in hot seasons to the open windows, tainting even the bad air of the unventilated apartments with yet more sickening and disease-engendering gases. As economy of space is the great desideratum with speculating house-owners, the passages and stairways are reduced in some instances to such dimensions that two can barely pass; and as they are commonly in the centre of the houses, all method of admitting air or light to them are dispensed with. In many buildings examined by the committee, not only were the stairways crooked and inordinately steep, but they were so dark that faces could not be distinguished, and so damp, chill and noisome, that respiration became difficult as soon as they were entered.

At Nos. 6 and 7 Hester-street, in the Eleventh ward, a tenant house of this description was visited. It was four stories in height, and cut up into suites of apartments, consisting of room and dark bedroom, for which was charged a rent of from $5 to $6.50 per month. It was evident that no thoughts of providing comfort, or preserving health, had entered into the plan of construction; and it was quite as apparent that, in the business of letting, no rule was followed but to secure the occupancy of every part of the building. The place literally swarmed with human life, but life of so abject and squalid a character as to scarcely merit the name. Dirty, half-naked children, slatternly women, and desperate looking men filled the cramped rooms and entries

to suffocating populousness. There was no provision for ventilation; the drainage was insufficient; the sinks in wretched condition, and the entire structure thick with nauseating smells. This building fronted upon the street, and was divided from a rear building by a confined yard, entered through it. The latter was constructed on the same plan, or want of plan, but the rooms were cheaper, and proportionately darker, smaller and unhealthier. In case of fire—so contracted is every avenue of egress—there would be great difficulty of escape.

At Nos. 80 and 90 Willet-street, the Committee examined a somewhat better style of special tenant-house; it consisted of a brick building, six stories high, with more capacious apartments than are usually allowed. It was occupied by twenty-six families, aggregating one hundred and twenty-three persons; a room and bed-room renting for $4, $6, and as high as $9 per month. One of the best features of this house was likewise a novel one—extension of each story forming a series of yards, one above another, in which, without going out of doors, the occupants of every floor enjoy room for washing and other domestic work, as well as a sort of ventilated play-ground for children. Attention to ventilation in this building was generally apparent, there being apertures over each door, and no lack of windows, while gas and water were carried throughout. Altogether this tenant-house was of a superior kind.

A four-story building, in the rear of 42 Ridge-street, was visited by the Committee, and found occupied by colored people exclusively. The apartments were comparatively neat, and the ventilation better than the average of such houses. A concomitant of this building, as well as of most of the tenant blocks, is a policy office, kept in the alley. These "policy shops" (so called) are the agencies of lottery ticket vendors, and are supported in contravention of law, by the wretched denizens of neighboring localities. Thousands of these places are established in the city; their profits, mode of operation, and even the parties implicated in their illegal existence, are known to the police and municipal authorities, while their evil effect upon the community is quite as notorious; yet no steps are taken to break them up, and day after day they spread out their lines, infecting all classes, and rendering the poor discontented, reckless, improvident, and destitute to the last degree. It is, indeed, singular that no energetic measures can be taken to insure the enforcement of the stringent

laws which exist relating to this illicit gambling. The occupants of tenant-houses, gregarious, imitative and credulous, are the principal victims to the delusive pursuit of profit by lottery-dabbling, and to this baneful practice, so universal, may be often traced their first lapse from industrious habits and subsequent resort to questionable means, not only of obtaining necessary livelihood, but of indulgence in this exciting and debasing practice.

Corresponding with the "policy shops," though ministering to another sort of appetite, the corner groceries here deserve notice, as they, like the former, derive their support from the wretched inhabitants of tenant houses, and are, therefore, a legitimate subject, at least of passing mention.* In the worst, filthiest, most degraded and impoverished streets, alleys, and blocks, the corner groceries flourish, and their proprietors continue to amass money. Wherever the visitor shall discover squalid, tottering buildings, dens of prostitution, resorts of thieves; wherever the city missionary shall penetrate, with tracts and spiritual counsel, and the practical philanthropist, with more material charity, and both discover destitution far exceeding their expectations; wherever the sanitary inspector shall ferret out cases of yellow fever, or cholera, small pox, or a hundred other diseases, threatening the general health, there, invariably will be found, in one block, one, two, three and often a dozen "groceries," or "groggeries," where poison is dealt out to the vicious, ignorant and desperate occupants of tenant houses.† A corner position is generally selected by the keepers of these shops, though cellars, rear rooms in alleys, and nooks of every sort, are appropriated for the purpose. The features of a "grocery" are exhibited in a bin of coal, near the door, under lock, from which fuel is dispensed to the poor, at the rate, sometimes, of forty and fifty cents per bushel; around this bin, and the threshold of the door, half rotted vegetables are exposed, and in the windows a few clay pipes, pieces of unmatched crockery, and samples of sugar and other "groceries"

*The daily necessaries of life are purchased at these shops, as well as various stimulants. Small wood, coals, adulterated groceries and tainted provisions, are sold by the keeper, who is often the owner or "agent" of the tenant house, at prices varying from twenty to sixty per cent, higher than the rates charged at decent stores; but the poor people who buy a "penn'orth o' sugar" and an ounce of tea, cannot be fastidious as to quality of the article.

† At 36 and 39, Cherry street, the front of a tenant house five stories high, is occupied by liquor sellers. This is a horrible place; the stairways, scarcely 20 inches wide, abruptly winding, filled with thick and fetid vapors, as are all the rooms. There are not less than 120 wretched Irish families, comprising 400 persons; yet many rooms were untenanted, when the committee made their examination. The yearly rental of this house is $4,800, and probably as much is expended at the "groceries," or "rum holes" connected with it. At 410, Water street, is a building 60 feet deep, 25 feet front, containing 81 families, when visited. The passages are so contracted, dark and steep that it is scarcely probable the tenants could be saved in case of fire; "grocery" rum shops surround it.

are displayed. Generally a sign of "pure Orange county milk" suggests to the purchaser that a villainous extract of diseased kine may be had under that name; but it is not more upon "milk" or "groceries" that the shop keeper depends for profit than it is upon his vile drugged compounds which he sells to miserable neighbors as pure, unadulterated "gin" or "brandy," at two and three cents per glass; tobacco leaf, infused with camphene water, is the principal staple for the manufacture of this horrible stuff, and its effect upon habitual users is manifest in most frightful diseases, suffered by parents and entailed upon children. It is vended from a bar at the rear of the "grocery," generally by a German or Irish proprietor, and either drank on the "premises," or carried away by purchasers by the half-pint or gill. At the bar, by day or night, may be found almost constantly, one or more bloated, debased wretches, in the guise of men or women, satisfying their terrible craving for the poison which has sapped their minds, and is rotting their bodies into pauper graves. To these "groceries," too, come poor families, as yet sober and industrious, to purchase the unhealthful provisions which the scantiness of their means will not permit them to seek elsewhere. To these "groceries" come young children, boys and girls, sent by their parents to buy food, and often, alas! to procure rum. What influence the daily witness of scenes familiar to the place, exerts upon these children, may be easily conceived. The ribald jest becomes common in their ears, the sight of indecencies soon ceases to make them blush, the contact of vice, ere long deadens their moral sense, and day by day, step following step, the young child ripens into the lewd, profane and abandoned adult. Such is the influence of the "grocery," the invariable concomitant of tenant houses; the purveyor for the necessities of tenants and the encourager of their vilest appetites. Let not the poor be judged too harshly that they succumb to temptations inwoven with their daily existence. Blame not poverty that in desperation it yields to vicious example and seeks alleviation in the excitement of "policy playing" or "rum drinking." Blame, rather, law and authority that they interpose not protection, nor establish incentives to industry, cleanliness, and the care of health. Blame, rather, philanthropy and justice! that they do not utter trumpet-tongued protests against the abuses allowed to exist, nor shake the very pillars of legislation with a demand for "reform! reform! root and branch reform!"

And let it here be remarked, as the result of close observation and varied inquiry, that the present debased condition of tenantry, and the increase of policy vending and rum selling, are explanatory of each other. The accessibility of incentives to disorder re-acts upon the unfortunate people who are tempted by it. In the illusory hope of profit through policy playing, those who indulge in it forget all other matters, precisely as the habitual drunkard is regardless of aught but the gratification of his appetite, till, becoming poorer and poorer, the wretched slaves of excitement pawn their last rags to obtain it, and in the end find themselves in the street, turned out from their forfeited shelter, and reduced to starve, beg or steal.

In Manhattan-place, between Goerck-street and the East river, the Committee visited several buildings known as the "Barracks," three stories high, in which another repulsive effect of filth and darkness was noticeable in the myriad swarms of chintez and other house vermin which overran the walls, floors and ceiling; some of the tortured occupants complained that they had not slept for several nights, which their haggard looks served to confirm. The walls of several rooms had been recently whitewashed, but the white had given place to the crimson marks of conflict with thousands of midnight prowlers. The rafters and walls of these buildings, like many others visited, harbored such incomputable numbers of these vermin, that nothing but the ordeal of fire, reducing the whole to ashes, can ever eradicate them entirely.

THE MODEL TENANT-HOUSES.

The Committee visited several buildings which have been erected with a view to providing some accommodations for tenantry, but as a general thing, though approaches are made here and there to a proper condition of things, they are all more or less open to objection. In a few of them the necessities of ventilation seem to have been somewhat considered, and in others the passages and stairways do not present the same traps for human life in emergencies of fire as in the less pretending houses built to "hold" tenants; but in the important combined r quisites of adequate drainage, abundant supply of water, separation of families, light, heat, dryness, ventilation, and appliances for health and cleanliness at all seasons, which *every* tenant-house, fit for human beings to dwell in, should be supplied with; there has been no building yet constructed which the Committee would endorse as a "model."*

* A "model" tenant-house, 100 Christopher street, is of general good arrangement, but with thin, pine partitions, suggesting danger in case of fire.

At 34 Baxter-street there is a tenant house, containing 101 families, called a "model" one, where a room 13 feet by 8 feet 9 inches, is let for $7 per month, and "accommodates" a family of five with sleeping room in a dark closet attached.*

In Greene-street there is a new "model" house lately erected, in which the halls and stairs are of good width, water and gas in the house, and attempts made at ventilation, but the ventilators open upon dead walls; the rooms are exceeding cramped, and with dark closets for dormitories; and, though the building is seven stories high, with an imposing front, it is far from possessing improvements which the committee consider indispensable to tenant houses. It is an advance, very far, upon the "rookeries" of the same ward (the 8th), such as "Rotten-row," "Soapfat-alley,"† and other shamefully neglected buildings,‡ but it is not free from many of the objections urged against even these.§

* The best arranged building visited by the Committee was the "Workingmen's Home," an establishment six stories in height, with handsome front, and extending from Elizabeth street to Mott street, over an area of ground 190 feet by 54. The ground cost $30,000; the building was erected (by the Workingmen's Home Association) at a cost of $60,000. It is of brick, nearly fire-proof. Each family has a kitchen, pantry, bed-room and small parlor —rent $8.50, and as low as $5.50 per month. On each floor is a wide hall, running through the building, on one side of which are closets for the use of occupants. On the south side is a yard for clothes drying, the tenants of each floor having the privilege of using it on alternate days of the week. Openings from this yard conduct to the cellars, which are divided into separate compartments, furnishing places for each family to store coal, wood, etc. There is Croton water throughout the building, and the halls are lighted with gas. Ventilation seems to have been regarded in the construction. There were 87 families in the building, all colored. Each parlor of the sets is, in dimensions, 14 feet by 7; the bed-room 8 by 7. A large room 59 feet by 54, on the upper floor, is set apart as a concert and lecture room on week days, and for a sabbath school room.—*Minutes by the Committee.*

† "Rotten Row" consists of fourteen houses, front and rear; 48 apartments in the front and 128 in the rear. There is not a single room, the wood work of which is not decayed and half the plaster rotted from the walls. The stairways are all dark, broken and filthy. Rent (for a single room) from $3 to $9 per month.—*Minutes of Investigation.*

"Soap-Fat Alley" (42 Hammersley street) receives its name from the occupation of the principal portion of its occupants. The doors entering the building are built in a wall forming one side of the alley, and are reached by means of open stairways constructed on the outside.—*Ibid.*

‡ On Mission Place (Five Points) a four story brick building was visited, in which there were eight rooms on a floor, occupied each by a family; average number in a family, seven persons. The floors were covered with dirt, which had lain so long that, with occasional slops of water and continued treading on, it had the appearance of the greasy refuse of a woolen mill There were sluggish, yellow drops pending from the low ceilings, and a dank, green slime upon the walls.—*Ibid.*

§ The "Bagdad Hotel," (so-called) corner of Forsyth and Stanton streets, and "Folsom's Barrack's," Nos. 184 and 186 Third street, seem to have been built on a principle of extorting the largest amount of money for the smallest possible amount of space. The agent, or business man of this last-mentioned structure, Mr. H. J. Folsom, stated that his brother owned the premises. The committee, after inspection, considered these "barracks," one of the worst places they had seen. Mr. Folsom produced a man, who ostensibly took care of them, to give a different opinion. This man, a German, relieved the house agent of personal trouble, in collecting rents, &c. In the course of examination a conversation took place, which may illustrate the description of "middle-men," with whom the poor tenants have to deal.

Mr. SHEA asked the German whether he considered the houses clean and in good order at the time the committee inspected them? He replied, in his "sweet German accent,"

It is unnecessary, however, to adduce further examples of the evils existing in the construction, associations and surroundings of tenant-houses. A large book might be filled with descriptions, but the worst details of one are so duplicated in another, that the recapitulation would be unnecessary. Let us now, with the light afforded by the various points to which we have adverted, as characteristic of the tenant-house system, proceed to enumerate its abuses, and consider their positive effects both upon tenants and the community at large.

"Tey ish ver coot shust now—mush better as dey ish sometime; only dere ish von leetle beets ice some places in ter pack place, vot ish not yet go avay mit ter warm wetter come. Tey ish ver coot shust now, shentlemens.

Mr. SHEA: Are the buildings now in as good order as during the summer months?

Mr. ALEXANDER (the German): Yes, shentlemens, tey ish ver clean and coot. Ven eet ish summer, ter ice vill be melt, go avay—vill pe try. Tey ish not so coot now, put tey ish ver coot shust now, shentlemens.

Mr. DUGANNE: How long have you had charge of these buildings?

Mr. ALEXANDER: I peen mit Meishter Folsom two year.

Mr. DUGANNE: Have you had charge of the buildings during all the time?

Mr. ALEXANDER: Meishter Folsom, he give me sharge.

Mr. DUGANNE: How long do tenants usually remain with you?

Mr. ALEXANDER: Sometime tey sthay tree, four month; sometime, von. Ven he no pay, I say, go avay mit yourself.

Mr. DUGANNE: How many rooms have you under your charge?

Mr. ALEXANDER: Saventy-two.

Mr. DUGANNE: If a tenant goes away without paying you his rent, are you responsible?

Mr. ALEXANDER: I go tell Meishter Folsom.

Mr. SHEA: Have you much sickness there?

Mr. ALEXANDER: No sickness; not von.

Mr. DUGANNE: Were there no deaths in the house during the cholera season?

[This question was asked because the committee were aware of the fact of there having occurred (in one basement room of the building) several fatal cases; the corpses of a man and woman being found, during the cholera season, lying beside a dead dog and a dying female.]

Mr. ALEXANDER: No; I vas not have sharge ven cholera vash here.

Mr. DUGANNE: Do you make tenants pay their rent in advance?

Mr. ALEXANDER: Every month in advance. Sometime, tey go avay, witout pay anytings."

Mr. DUGANNE: What rent do you charge per month?

Mr. ALEXANDER: I sharge in basement not so mush as vay up high.

Mr. SHEA: Have you any rules for the government of tenants?

Mr. ALEXANDER: Notings—*only apout ter rent.*

Mr. FOLSOM (turning to Alexander): Don't you tell the tenants they must keep things clean, and not be disorderly?

Mr. ALEXANDER: I say, you must keep clean, and makes no troubles.

In answer to a question Mr. Folsom said he could not tell exactly what the original cost of the buildings was; they had been built by his brother on speculation, and put up cheaply. His brother was told that if he erected good houses he could not get good tenants, so he built the "Barracks." He believed his brother was sorry that he had done so. Mr. Folsom further stated that he thought the law for dispossessing tenants should be amended, so that the process would be less expensive. As it now stood, if a landlord wished to dispossess, the tenant could make it cost him five or six dollars, if he (the tenant) put in a defence. He thought a landlord ought to be able to get a warrant to dispossess for $1. [One of the committee (Mr. Duganne) here asked a leading question—whether, in Mr. F's opinion, if the tenant should give the landlord trouble by presuming to put in a defence, he, the tenant, ought not to be made liable to imprisonment?—to which Mr. F. rather naively answered in the affirmative.]

Mr. REED (of the committee) suggested that the effect of such an amendment of the law would be to deprive the tenant of his right to defend himself in court.

The foregoing colloquy satisfied the committee of the evils of the "middleman" system. The buildings under consideration (Folsom's Barracks) are first built as a speculation in the cheapest manner, and then the owner delegates his brother to oversee them; the brother again gives them in charge to a third party, who, he says, can "do better with them than he can." Here we have two agents between landlord and tenant, both, of course, drawing substance from the miserable people inhabiting these filthy houses.—*Minutes of the Investigation.*

I.—WANT OF AIR.

The necessity of pure air is a primary necessity of life itself, and yet it is only of late years that its importance has been adequately considered in the construction of our first class dwelling houses; it is, therefore, not marvelous that proper ventilation should be lacking in the hovels of the poor; nevertheless, it is there that public health demands its application, because it is among the poor that disease, as a general rule, has its origin. Poverty cannot command space; it must content itself with narnow limits wherein to dwell. Poverty cannot flee to the country on the approach of epidemics, nor change its habitation at all without expense which it cannot bear. Poverty huddles together whole families in one room, crowding a half dozen children with their parents in the same bed. Poverty accumulates dirt, because it performs tasks which soil body and garments; but it lacks leisure to cleanse itself properly, because its time, when coupled with industry, is employed in providing means of support. Yet, if an epidemic steals upon the community, it seeks the abode of poverty first, finding there nourishment and encouragement. But are epidemics confined to poverty? No! because they only make of it *fuel*, wherewith to become more raging and powerful, to destroy wealth besides. The foul air engendered amid filth is no respecter of the rich citizen; the fever bred in the hovel escapes through its shattered doors, and loads the breeze without, creeping insidiously away from close-pent alleys and noisome cellars, till it reaches some few squares or miles distant, the jessamine-bordered casement of an aristocratic mansion, and glides in, unseen, with the odors that ascend from a blooming garden or fragrant conservatory. Then, when a cherished wife, or idolized child, is stricken down and withered, the citizen may reflect, if he be wise, that the destroyer is the fruit of his own neglect, the result of his apathy to the wants and necessities of the poor, whom he, with his enlightened fellows in the same sphere of life, has left to suffocate with malaria, wallow in filth, and stagnate amid their shameful surroundings.*

* Mr. G. W. Morton, the present able and vigilant city inspector, says, in speaking of this subject: "It is from the narrow-streets, alley-ways and courts, that the poisonous gases, creations arising from accumulated filth and decaying vegetable and animal matter, are sent forth, and it is in these localities that death reaps his most abundant harvest. It is in such localities that the cholera originated in this city, and where experience has warned us every epidemic finds its greatest number of victims." In reference to the tenant houses themselves, the city inspector expresses hope that the labors of this Investigating Committee and their results," will present such suggestions as will prove of utility to remedy the defects now existing."

So, then, firstly, the preservation of life and health in the body politic, demands that these ulcers upon it, the condition and habits of the poor, should be probed, opened, cauterized and cured. The poor must breathe good air, not only to sustain their own existence, but because the same air is more or less inhaled by their more favored fellow citizens. Narrow alleys, dark, muddy, gloomy lanes, courts shut in by high walls, and dwellings, into the secrets of which the sun's rays never penetrate, are a portion of the veins and arteries of a great city; and if they be disregarded, the heart and limbs of the city will sooner or later suffer, as surely as the vitals of the human system must suffer by the poisoning or disease of the smallest vesicle. The poor, in their hovels and kennels, (for many of their dwelling places deserve no better name) cannot die constantly by poison, without the rich suffering, sooner or later, from the same venom dispersed abroad. Here, then, apart from considerations prompted by humanity, we find physical interests at stake that are shared in by the entire community. Here, then, the community must interfere, through authority and by legislation, to arrest, destroy and sear out forever, the "sores" which putrefy in our great cities.* It will not do to leave our humbler fellow citizens to the mercy of grasping speculators. Poverty should not be compelled to commit daily suicide, because property holders choose, for their own profit, to furnish the means. Landlords should, on the contrary, be obliged by law to regard the well being of the community, if they have no consideration for the health or comfort of the wretched victims of their extortions and avarice. They have no right, moral or legal, to erect laboratories in every narrow street, wherein disorder, crime, pestilence and death are to be distilled, concentrated and discharged upon the community. Therefore, the law must step in and determine what, under every circumstance, a human habitation is; what is required in air and space to sustain life as it should be sustained, and prevent the annual decimation of whole neighborhoods through the cupidity of capital.† It is not alone "pestilence which walketh in

* Dr. John H. Griscom, formerly city inspector of New-York, asks, in this connection: "Is it astonishing that the dispensary is called upon, very frequently, to extend its aid to these inmates? and *should there not be some remedy for this dreadful state of things?* The whole of these houses, besides the cellars, present a condition unfit for human habitation, and yet crowded to a melancholy degree. A *sanitary law*, that would reach the sore, and be well applied, would save a large amount of life, health and morals."

†Let us first cast the beam from our own eye. We are parties to their degradation, *inasmuch as we permit the habitation of places, from which it is not possible improvement in condition or habits can come.* We suffer the landlord to stow them, like cattle, in pens, and to compel them to swallow poison with every breath. They are *allowed* (may it not be said *required?*) to live in dirt, when the reverse, rather, should be enforced.—*Dr. J. H. Griscom.*

darkness" that is the scourge of the tenant house and its localities; there are a variety of diseases incident to the system which cast forth their hideous shadows upon our future health in the form of hollow-chested consumptives, procreating their feeble offspring; scrofula tainting its transmitted blood; erysipelas, dropsy, malformation, scurvy, jaundice, and humors of every kind, inoculating their venom by intercourse of sexes, until, ere long, the horrible excrescences of goitre and elephantiasis may become familiar to our eyes, as in the *plazas* of South America or the stricken valleys of France.*

Let, then, legislation interpose in season, and decide by ordinances, which shall admit of no misconstruction, as to the proper means of ventilating the dwellings of the poor, from data gathered by research and attested by science. Let stringent regulations be promulged, which, rigidly enforced, shall compel the erection of dwelling houses for tenants, with such appliances for securing air and sunlight as are decided necessary for the habitations of wealth and luxury. The air of heaven, at least, ought to be inhaled in as much purity by the beggar as by the king; and there is no "royal road" to ventilation.

Now, in the building, heretofore mentioned as Manhattan place, there are ninety-six apartments, and they were inhabited, when visited, by *one hundred and forty-six* families, numbering in all *five hundred and seventy seven* persons. Computing this aggregate of tenantry by the area of space occupied, we find an average of *six* persons to a room of 12 by 10 feet in dimensions. Out of *seventy-six* houses examined, in one district, (the 10th,) the average number of persons occupying them was *seventy* to a house, or *eight* to a room, 12 by 14 feet square. In one block or series of buildings visited, *two hundred families*, (averaging *five* persons to a family,) were confined, without ventilation, proper light, or conveniences for obtaining water. In another building examined, *eighty-five* apartments contained *three hundred and ten* persons, and all the rooms were not rented. If such aggregations of human life, amid filth, vermin, disease and destitution, may

* The mortuary statistics of our cities reveal the alarming increase of that class of hereditary and infectious diseases, which have their origin in malaria, and are aggravated by filth and deprivation, spreading physical and mental taint through the community and to posterity. In the fourteenth century, when cities were indeed "sores," with ignorance, oppression, and squalor combined, broke out those destructive pestilences which swept millions of high and low to a common grave, and in the seventeenth, again, amid the filth and suffering of Old London, came that horrible visitation of disease, which struck down its twelve thousand weekly, for month following month. History furnishes truths that should be warnings for legislation.

not be aptly termed "laboratories of poison," there is no fitting term whereby to designate them.*

Hundreds of the miserable occupants of these establishments, dwell in cellars, over five feet, as we have noticed, below the street level. In many parts of the city, on sunken lands, and where the sewerage is incomplete, these underground rooms are sometimes submerged by the drainage of heavy rains. In some, this annoyance is constant, and the bricks or wooden floors, (where flooring remains,) are continually oozing with mouldy damp. Constant rheumatic affections, hip complaints, and affections of the bowels, are prevalent among the occupants. Instances have been known of the confinement of females on beds raised by a few bricks from the water which flooded the floor beneath. Is it surprising that thousands of children die at the earliest period, in such wretched holes and burrowing places?†

The quantity of air consumed by the lungs of a human adult in a minute is half a cubic foot.‡ At least a dozen times this amount is required at the same time to permeate the system, after performing which function it becomes corrupt, and is emitted in the form of carbonic acid gas—a poison. How long will it require for five or six persons, in a room twelve feet square, to consume all the vitality of the air within it, supposing that vital air had ever entered such a place? Not more than half an hour. And all the air breathed thereafter by the five or six persons while they remained in the room, with doors closed and without ventilators, would be what they had previously ex-

* These evils are to be corrected alone by the *strong arm of the law*. The ignorance of some and the cupidity of others will render any other measure ineffectual in correcting the pestilential sources of misery in our midst. Just so long as there are those whose poverty compels them to accept the miserable accommodations to be found in these wretched abodes, so long will there be found those to take advantage of their necessities, and coin money from the sufferings of the poison-breeding inmates. The ingenuity of property-holders in those localities where the poor most do congregate, seems taxed to the utmost to crowd the greatest number of human beings into the smallest possible space Every additional tenant pays full tribute to their purse, and what matters it if health, decency and morality be corrupted and destroyed, if the poisoned heart's blood is turned into gold to add to their wealth? What wonder is it that such abodes should become the home of pestilence, and that, as if in revenge for their wrongs and sufferings, the plague should propagate itself far and wide throughout the boundaries of the town?"—*Report on the Sanitary Police of Cities, by James M. Newman, M. D.*

† It is estimated that seven thousand persons dwell in *cellars* in New-York city.

‡ Dr. Reid, whose methods of ventilation were applied to the Parliament houses in London, estimates the quantity of air necessary for proper respiration by an adult, as *ten* cubic feet per minute. Dr. Arnott thinks three cubic feet might be sufficient, while other scientific men in England contended that thirty, forty, and even sixty feet a minute were necessary to the luxurious breathing of members of Parliament. Dr. Wyman, in his work on ventilation, says that two or three feet per minute may "support life for the time, but with constant feeling of discomfort and strain upon the health."

haled ; in other words, they would breath poisoned air over and over again. Apply this computation to a tenant-house, containing from two hundred to a thousand persons—with exhalations from sinks, decaying matter, and diseased bodies all around them —the whole hemmed in on all sides by high walls of a narrow court, in a sultry summer's day—and can we wonder if typhus or yellow fevers, cholera or small-pox, should visit the "laboratory" in search of ammunition ?*

The *location* of tenant houses is the first reason of their lack of ventilation. A lot is secured, fronting upon the street, sufficiently large to admit of building *one* properly arranged dwelling-house, with necessary yard room; but, in order to make the speculation profitable, two separate buildings are erected in the area, with a wall between them, the rear only accessible through the first floor entry of the front house, or by an alley-way at its side. It is probably a natural consequence of the high value of land in such places that economy of ground-plan is sought, but that is no reason why such economy should be permitted, to the detriment of a whole neighborhood's health.

The *construction* of the tenant house, in the next place, is such as to render proper ventilation impossible. There is seldom or never any provision made to secure a *draught* of air *through* the building. The plan of *two* rooms, one dark, or with a small aperture opening into the other (or into the hall, in the *best* dwellings,) is the general one. Fresh air never reaches the inner apartment in sufficient quantity to disperse fixed gases generated by its constant use as a dormitory, wherein are accumulated all the impurities thrown off from the system. In summer the absence of a draught allows the growth of a positively *putrid* atmosphere, and in winter the case is, if possible, worse, because in cold weather, doors, windows and every outlet are closed, and a dry, hot stove, or a smoky chimney, adds to the poison evolved from filth and natural secretions. It must be remembered, too, that entire families are constantly together in these tenant-houses; disease giving off its effluvia to be breathed by lungs somewhat

* "In Glasgow, Scotland, there was a lodging house where fever resided, but by making an opening from the top of each room, through a channel of communication to an air-pump common to all the channels, the disease disappeared altogether."—*Eng. Health of Towns Rep., Vol. I.*

An average of 50 days in a year of sickness is given in the reports on London lodging houses, as due to the insalubrity of the dwellings.

"I am inclined to think," says the author of the "Claims of Labor," "that one-half per cent. of the annual outlay of London, (that is ten shillings in every hundred pounds) spent only for one year in improvements connected with ventilation, would diminish the sickness of London by one-fourth."

sounder, but destined, sooner or later, to be tainted and decayed. It requires no medical authority to support the assertion, then, that the inhabitants of tenant-houses, as now existing, are dying continually by slow poison; their blood deteriorating, their muscular system becoming weaker, their lungs and brain clogged, and the vitality of every function lessened day by day, as a natural consequence of the want of air.

WANT OF WATER.

If a citizen accustomed to the luxury of his daily bath of warm and cold water, who pays his Croton tax with punctuality, and looks upon a supply of the pure element as a necessity, like food, raiment and air, should be told of individuals and whole families who do not use water once a week, or perhaps a month, save "as a beverage," that citizen would, doubtless, be tempted to exclaim: "Dirty brutes," and he would be, indeed, too just in bestowing such an appellation upon the filthy human beings they described. But, "are they to blame?" is the question.

The tenant-house is built upon speculative capital, and its construction is economical of convenience. Water-pipes introduced into a large building involves, in the first place, a large outlay, and in the next, are productive of constant expense, by the injury suffered through ignorance or neglect. "It is useless to supply these people with water," remarked a landlord to a member of the Committee; "they don't know its use! They let the pipes freeze up; they let the water run away; sometimes the pipes burst and overflow the house! I can assure you, these tenants only *abuse* water!"

Such is the testimony of a landlord, and it is a sample of many excuses for the condition of tenant-houses. But, perhaps, if the landlord were to enquire, he could ascertain from builders that pipes can be so protected that they shall not freeze; that they can be so constructed as to be in no danger of bursting, and that, if tenants "*abuse*" water, agents and care-takers ought to be employed to teach them its proper "use," both for their own benefit and the well-being of the house and its neighborhood. Water is a necessity of *all* dwellings and *all* life, and its *freest* use should not only be tolerated, but enjoined upon such tenants. "What sort of a building would you erect for the accommodation of rag-pickers and bone-gatherers, and tenants of such dirty habits and modes of obtaining a livelihood," asked a member of the Committee, of alderman Blunt, (a landlord and builder) who was giving

his testimony before us. The alderman replied, in substance, that he would build two brick pens of two walls, and two wide doors, and that he would open the doors every morning, turn on a stream of Croton through the pen, washing out tenants, rags and filth together.* This jocular notion of the alderman conveys a hint as to the necessity of water, at least, and the impossibility of securing cleanliness among such a class of people without its free and constant use. Without proceeding to the extremity of a diurnal drowning out of dirty tenants, there ought surely to be provided means of cleansing and purifying their abodes, and regulations, strictly enforced by competent authority and agents, should insure the observance of this important sanitary duty.

"Water is next to air in importance," says Dr. Newman in dwelling upon this subject, "as a sanitary measure; reverse the ordinary course of things, and let the pipes be laid and the water carried, first, to the narrow streets and lanes, and to the abodes of the poor; let the supply be abundant for their every necessary want; let the possibility of a wasteful use of it be a question of secondary importance; for, while disease is engendered among the abodes of the poor, the poison may distil over and invade the homes where every comfort that money can purchase is found." Dr. Newman's position is correct, and the great importance of plenty of water, next to pure air, must enter into the consideration of every effort to improve the tenant-house system.

WANT OF ROOM.

If lack of air and water be crying evils of a tenant house, as now arranged, want of room is no less a baneful feature, and at the bottom of moral as well as physical degradation. The congregation of large numbers of human beings, even under the least objectionable circumstances, is always more or less productive of effects injurious to health; but the "huddling together," (to use the expression of a tenant,) of men, women and children, in confined rooms, without privacy, is infinitely more destructive of social morals. The crowding of passengers into a ship's hold or steerage, the detention of prisoners and patients in all regulated jails and hospitals, the accumulation of human life in armies and camps, have always been esteemed prolific sources of fevers, scurvies and other epidemic or infectious disorders. But when, to the

* For a colony of rag-pickers, he suggested a sort of hollow square, built around with pens on each side, a cess-pool in the middle, and a plentiful supply of Croton, to be let on at stated seasons by the policemen, so as to wash away everything that was not cleared off the place. For poor people, the best sort of dwellings would be houses built in courts and let in floors or flats, well ventilated.—*Minutes of Investigation.*

unhealthiness and discomfort, are added the absence of all salutary restraints upon personal conduct and temper, all safe guards or protections of personal modesty, and often all restrictions as to decency, then in promiscuous mingling of unfortunate humanity, you have the type of the present system of tenant house gathering.

Let the mere theorist on political economy, picture to himself the surroundings and associations of one of the many houses visited by the committee; let him leave the thoroughfares, brilliant with fashion and refinement, and go down, as one has said, into the "wells of the city." Covering his nostrils to exclude the stench, as he reaches the purlieus of misery, he will pass into a narrow, unhealthy street, its gutters choked with garbage, warning him to tread carefully the broken sidewalks. Glancing around he will see some miserable shops, with damaged provisions at the doors and windows; others with discolored curtains concealing the interior. These he will recognise as "groceries," or in the vernacular, "rum holes," and those, he may learn, are "policy" or "pawn broking" shops. He is surprised at the multitude of half-naked, dirty and leering children, swarming at the corners, at the mouths of dark alleys, and at the doorless entrances of tottering houses; but if he should peer into the "groceries" or cellars, he would discover "owners" to these little ones, whose appearances would astonish him quite as much. Let him penetrate one of the alleys (applying now a *viniagrette* to his nostrils) and ascend the creaking, mouldy stairs of one of the tenant houses. The passage is so narrow that he can scarcely turn, so dark he cannot discern objects before him, so steep that he bruises his shins, and so thick with fœtid odors that his breath becomes stifled. Let him not take hold of the rickety bannister, for he may contract some cutaneous disorder; let him not brush the wall with his person, for he may thus be covered with vermin. He must be cautious, and move gingerly, amid so much filth, darkness and disease. Arrived at the first landing, he may feel, it is likely, that he has explored sufficiently, and think of retracing his steps; but first, let him open one of the doors, which his somewhat accustomed vision now perceives, and walk into the apartment.

But my theorist is a modest man, and starts back; he sees a small, dimly-lighted room, with no furniture but a three-legged stool and broken pine table; no bedding but some rags bundled in the corners, but upon those rags he discovers lying three fami-

lies two nearly naked men, three women with scarce covering enough to conceal their sex, a young girl of fifteen, and several male and female children of tender ages.*

Would the visitor pursue his investigations? He will find other apartments, some with beds on the floor, some with wooden bunks, where lodgers and boarders, without distinction of sex, are "accommodated" with shelter by the night or week, and where the "transient" customers make each other's first acquaintance by contact on the straw or rags which forms their common couch.† Let him open another door, and he will find it occupied entirely by young females, from fourteen to twenty years of age—six of them; and these girls, some of whom are ruddy and innocent-looking, he will find bedizened with cheap ribbons and gewgaws. They will not recoil at his presence. Alas! from earliest childhood they have been familiar with men—they were reared in the "single room"‡—and, before he leaves the house, or if he visits a hundred others, he will see as many similar rooms, with

* Lodgings for such persons may be found in the house I have described. These houses [the writer is speaking of a tenant block in the vicinity of St. Patrick's Cathedral, the landlords of which are principally rum sellers] contain, I say, to a large extent, their own customers, for they are the pauper's rendezvous, and offer lodgings to beggars of every grade. They seem to be always open for new comers, and in some way or other they can accommodate them. I have found three families of men, women and children, in one room of one of these houses; there they lived, and there they all slept. Now, if a woman accustomed to humble life or decent poverty, be constrained to remove to such a place, what must be the effect on her mind, her morals and her habits? At first she will recoil from undressing in presence of a strange man, but soon she will do it without a blush. Is she a wife? There are other wives and their husbands in the room, without even a curtain, to hide the most private transactions. That which transpires cannot be unobserved, though seeking the darkest recess, and it will soon be imitated, without secrecy and without scruple. Children, too, will see them, and think and imitate—and thus become depraved in their thoughts, desires and practices. Can any one doubt that there must be a rapid declension in morals in both parents and children, or that a bar is here opposed to moral and religious instruction, or that *this state of things is consequent on the circumstances and condition of life?*"—*Letter from Rev. Isaac Orchards (Missionary of the Fifteenth ward) to Dr. Griscom.*

† The instances are many in which one or more families, of from three to seven or more members, of all ages and both sexes, are congregated in a single and often contracted apartment. Here they eat, drink, sleep, work, dress and undress, without the possibility of that privacy which an innate modesty imperatively demands; in sickness and health it is the same. What is the consequence? The sense of shame, that greatest, surest safeguard to virtue, except the grace of God, is gradually blunted, ruined, and finally destroyed. New scenes are witnessed and participated in, with a countenance of brass, the very *thought* of which, once, would have filled the sensitive heart of modesty with pain, and covered its cheek with burning blushes. The mind of one thus brought in daily and nightly contact with such scenes must become greatly debased, and its fall before the assaults of vice rendered almost certain."—*Letter to S. Griscom from Samuel Russell, Jr., Missionary of the 8th ward.*

‡ "A single fact will show some of the evils of the one room system. As a tract visiter knocked at the door of a room he was invited in; he opened the door and entered, when, to his astonishment, he found a *man entirely naked*, sitting with his wife and children; the former was washing the shirt which the latter had taken off."—*Letter of Rev. Geo. Holt, Missionary of 1st and 2d wards.*

"I would recommend that the corporation build, and encourage the building of houses suitable for the poor, so constructed that each family may have at least two rooms. Do this, and many of these evils which now exist will be done away, and the blessings of many who are now ready to perish, will come upon them."—*Ib.*

like occupants, older and younger, precocious, libidinous, tainted with disease, and hurrying to one common resting place—the clay of "Potter's Field."

But are *all* the inmates of tenant-houses so vicious, reckless, depraved and desperate? Do the denizens of these vile localities constitute a class by themselves, shut out from sympathy with virtue, or companionship with innocence, and doomed to remain pariahs from decent society?

On the contrary, I reply, that it is because worthy, industrious and virtuous people are compelled, through the present evil system, to herd with the reprobate and vicious, that we condemn the more especially such mode of tenant-house congregation.* If the occupants of these places were *all* corrupt in morals, bad citizens, and habitual disregarders of law and decency, the legislation which should reach their case is already to be found in books of criminal statutes. *But they are not all bad who dwell amid evil associations.* As wild roses may bloom in swamps, and violets upon the edge of charnel pits or the crest of volcanoes, so in these social morasses, Golgothas and Sodoms, there are to be found honest, laborious men, struggling against want and disease; self-sacrificing women, toiling and suffering for beloved ones; and little children, with ears and eyes as yet unused to sounds and sights of wickedness, with hearts as yet unseared by the contact of surrounding corruption. It is to release these from more than Egyptian bondage, save them from impending ruin, encourage their efforts and hopes; it is to shield the man from despair, the woman from debasement, the children from almost inevitable licentiousness and destruction, that legislation is most earnestly invoked, that reform should be thorough and immediate.†

* In visiting a place called "Freeman's Hall," (in Brooklyn,) which had formerly been an assembly room for dancing and public meetings, and altered to a tenant house, the committee found many of the residents ashamed of their apartments, and loath to open them for examination. One poor creature said he was the "son of a nobleman," and assured us that he would not remain in a tenant house like that a moment after his finances should enable him to remove. We believed the latter, at least, however his nobility might be doubted.—*Minutes of Investigation.*

† "In a family composed of several persons of both sexes, in circumstances admitting of their living in separate apartments, the restraints of the circle of which they are a part, compel an observance of the separation of the sexes, and other social proprieties. They grow up habituated to correct deportment and moral restraints, which accompany them into all their relations of life. But confine that same family to one room, compel them to perform all their personal and domestic duties in view of each other, to sleep, dress and undress in each other's presence, and can it be doubted that the nice moral distinctions so necessary to a life of virtue, will be greatly subdued, or overthrown, the heart be hardened against the teachings of the moralist, and the more lustful passion, become of increased power? Yet this is the condition of hundreds of families, *who would gladly escape the* maelstrom of morals which threatens to engulf them. *And this is undoubtedly a principal source of the dreadful amount of licentiousness* infesting this city."—*Griscom's Address before the American Institute.*

Would that the necessities involved in this work could be fully brought home to the minds of reasoning men—the hearts of tender, sympathising women, and impress them with the sincere convictions aroused in the bosoms of this investigating Committee. Would that a voice, powerful as an angel's trump, might echo our feeble words, penetrate the high places of authority, reach unto the possessors of useless wealth, sink to the hearts of judges and law-givers, priests and teachers of the people, incessantly reminding all of their duty in respect to the poor slaves of necessity who dwell, rot and die in the squalid dens, out of which inexorable capital hoards its blood-stained gains.

No! they are not all vile and abandoned who dwell in tenant-houses, hidden away in dark alleys, and hemmed in by narrow streets abject with filth and deformity. Sometimes—perhaps not seldom—far up in the garret of a mouldering hovel, or deep in its clammy cellars, there are pure souls and honest hearts—pure and honest amid crime and misery! But, oh! philanthropist! oh! legislator! how long can they remain unsullied? That is the question.*

> Vice is a monster of so frightful mien,
> As, to be *hated*, needs but to be seen;
> But seen too oft—familiar to the face—
> We first endure, then *pity*, then *embrace!*"

WANT OF LIGHT AND CLEANLINESS.

We have considered, in the various phases, the evils arising from lack of air, water and space. We may now glance at the common feature of a want of light, the fruitful cause of filth and disease.

A visitor to our charity hospitals and asylums, or to the infirmaries connected with private benevolent institutions in our city, cannot have failed to remark the number of cases of diseased eyes

* "Suppose a respectable mechanic or merchant reduced by unavoidable misfortune to penury. He must leave his comfortable home. Accustomed to fulfil his promises, the least possible promise for rent will, in his opinion, be the best arrangement for the present; and however the hearts of those accustomed to domiciliary cleanliness and comfort may sicken as they enter where twenty or more families are domiciled on the same lot, with passage and yard conveniences common to all, yet they will make a virtue of necessity; it is a shelter; its walls encircle all now dear to their hearts; and most prized of all, perhaps, because it hides them from their acquaintances of more prosperous days. They, of course, purify their narrow home, and, as far as may be, make it comfortable. When weary nature must have rest, their one room, which has served both as kitchen and parlor, must also be their place of retirement. What modesty would recently have shrunk from, must now be submitted to; and, *once submitted to*, is ever after less and less painful. Then commences a deterioration of moral perception. It is impossible for one, of so many families, to keep the places common to all, clean and orderly; and what is habitually witnessed in the halls, and the apartments of neighbors, will soon be permitted in their own, especially as none accustomed to other appearances will probably be their visitors."—*George H. Bullen, Missionary 13th ward.*

in small children. If he will go down to the abodes of destitution, whence these children have been rescued by philanthropy, he will discern thousands of other infants affected in like manner, and if he would trace the cause, he need not go behind the habits of their generators, combined with the filth, and mainly the darkness, in which both parents and offspring habitually dwell.

The one-quarter of these wretched little ones, it is true, never reach the second year of their poisoned existence; more than a third die before the fifth, and less than half arrive at twenty years of age.* The army of deadly enemies encamped about the mother's womb—in the form of malaria, starvation, intemperance and vile humors—attack the child from the moment of birth, and assault thereafter every hour of his being, till death or some humanitarian miracle releases him from their thraldom. The *zymotics*, as they are termed—those infinite varieties of disease, inseparable from the locality in which he awakens to life, attend his infancy, or cut short at once its brittle thread of life.† But, if he escape with life these adversaries, constantly lying in wait for his earliest years, the child does not remain free from their dismal effects. *Cachexia* and *scrofula* cling to his vitiated system; abscess and ulcer often eat into auditory and olfactory nerves; while *opthalmia*, invading the organs of sight, becomes manifest in the forms so common and repulsive.

In the sunless abysses of the Mammoth cave of Kentucky the naturalist discovers fishes without eyes, the darkness of those depths forcing the visual organs, if they ever exist, to conform to the results of *disuse*, and become *extinct*, because not necessary to existence. Troglodytes, or inhabitants of caves, in past ages, have always been feeble in sight. Persons dwelling constantly, or mainly, in dark chambers, miners accustomed to toil at the bottom of shafts in the earth, and prisoners confined for years in gloomy cells, become incapable of distinguishing objects at mid-day, and like bats or moles, require shadow or darkness for the exercise of vision. It is no wonder, then, that occupants of dark, sunless cellars, and habitual dwellers in dim closets, should be

* These facts are proved by mortuary statistics.

† *Zymotics* are described as diseases "propagated by emanations from the ground, from decaying animal or vegetable matter, from cases of previous disease, or from *over-crowded human beings*; diseases which are, or may be, epidemic, endemic or contagious." There are sixteen distinct forms of these diseases now generally reported in our mortuary lists, viz: "cholera, cholera infantum, croup, diarrhœa, dysentery, erysipelas, intermittent fever, remittent fever, typhus fever, hooping cough, influenza, measles, small pox, scarletina, syphylis, and thrush."

subject to diseases of the eye, especially when, in connection with the obscurity, other evils, such as smoke and noxious gases, as well as famine, drunkenness and debauchery, add their malign influences.*

In tenant-houses, as now located and constructed, the consideration of light appears to have extended with the builder no farther, in many cases, than the providing of windows. It is true these are important adjuncts to the transmission of an important element, but if they open, as often seen, upon a dead stone wall, or a *well* shut in by high brick buildings, and of scarce ten or fifteen feet width, there is question as to the value of such windows. Ten, twenty or forty windows may thus open opposite to the high wall of a back building, and yet very little light to the interior will be admitted. Light depends upon the amount of sky, not the amount of glass, and a window which would afford ample light to a room when exposed to 90 or 80 degrees altitude of sky, may be wholly insufficient when only obtaining 20 degrees from the zenith downward.

Filth is almost inseparable from darkness in the tenant-house system; filth physical, filth social, filth moral, hides under the veil of shadow for security if not from shame. "The wicked love darkness because their deeds are evil," and the degraded denizen of a cellar or dark alley learns to regard the shadows which surround him as curtains and coverings for practices that would offend the sunlight. It is in such obscurity that the blush of innocence fades away, as innocence itself departs forever. It is in gloomy recesses that prostitution is familiarized, and incest becomes common.† It is darkness that hides crime, and it is

* The following notice, of a visit to one of the tenant houses, conveys an idea of much that is usually encountered: "Sitting together upon the same broken box, lying together upon the same dirty straw, covered by the same filthy shreds, vieing with each other in the utterance of foul obscenities, you have a favorable picture of the mass of corruption and squalid misery gathered inside the walls of that unventilated building in Mission Place. In that single house there was that which made the soul sicken and turn in horror from the sight. Vice, with its pretentious brow, and wretchedness, with hollow cheek and sunken, glazed eye, were there; hunger and lust stood side by side; petit larceny and cold-blooded murder were holding converse."—*Minutes of Investigation.*

† In the First ward, New-York, the deaths during the year 1855 were 632; while in the Twelfth ward, containing more than twice the population, there were but fifty more than this; and in the Ninth ward, with more than four times the population, there were but 400 more deaths, showing the mortality among the poor to be as two to one. Of this First ward, the health-warden says: "Dance houses and houses of prostitution in the First ward are numerous. Houses of this kind are located in this ward, principally on Washington and Greenwich-streets, from the Battery to Liberty-street; nearly all are kept by Germans and Irish. The most abandoned and degraded creatures of human kind in the city resort to these places. Night is often made hideous by their debaucheries and carousals. The sanitary condition of these premises, in the general, is anything else than calculated to promote the public health. Police and health officers are repeatedly called by respectable citizens to

darkness that suffers the accumulation of dirt unseen and unregarded, until the inevitable result of disease arises to destroy its thousands, and spread havoc and dismay throughout the civil fabric.

Dirt, protected by darkness, accumulates rapidly, until, in some localities, it would seem that nothing less than a repetition of the herculean feat of turning a river through length and breadth, could effectually rid them of their Augean impurities.* This aggregation necessarily involves decomposition and exhalations, and is a direct cause of the zymotic diseases generated in the tenant-house neighborhoods. Not only do we look for the first cases of cholera or yellow fever in such ill-omened localities, but we are satisfied, from medical statistics, that the more or less malignant forms of typhoid fevers are to be directly traced to the over population and filthy abodes of poverty. In such places the elements and the people seem to vie with each other in accumulating agents of disease. Gases generated by heat, odors exhaled from decay, personal accumulations of filth, and domestic habits of indecency and indulgence, combine to produce

quell riots and abate nuisances of the very worse kind. The occupants seldom make any effort to keep their premises in a healthy condition. Little or no attention is paid to the requests of police or health officers. To a casual observer, even, it must be evident that, without exception, for disease, degradation and houses of prostitution, the First ward may be regarded as the worst in the city. Efforts have been repeatedly made by the better class of citizens in the ward to break up these frightful causes of disease and death; yet no effectual remedy has been put in requisition. I hope that the legislative authorities of the State or city will take some action in regard to a matter of such vast importance and magnitude. N. B. S."

* "It is very frequently the case that families, after occupying rooms a few weeks, will change their location, leaving behind them all the dirt which their residence has occasioned. Upon this the next comers will sit down, being so much occupied with the hurry of moving, and with the necessity of placing their furniture immediately in order, that attention to cleansing the apartment is entirely out of the question until they are "settled;" and then, if done at all, it is in the most careless and inefficient manner. Very often, perhaps, in a majority of the cases in the class of which I speak, no cleansing other than washing the floor, is ever attempted, and that but seldom. Whitewashing, cleaning of furniture or bedding, or persons, in many cases, is *never* attempted. Some have old pieces of carpet, which are never shaken, (they would not bear it,) and are used to hide the filth on the floor. Every corner of the room, of the cupboards, of the entries and stairways, is filled up with dirt. The walls and ceilings, with the plaster broken off in many places, exposing the lath and beams, and leaving openings for the escape of effluvia of vermin, dead and alive, are smeared with the blood of unmentionable insects, and dirt of all indescribable colors. The low rooms are diminished in their areas by the necessary encroachments of the roof, or the stairs leading to the rooms above; and behind and under them is a hole, into which the light of day never enters, and where a small bed is often pushed in, upon which the luckless and degraded tenants pass their nights, weary and comfortless. In these places the filth is allowed to accumulate to an extent almost incredible. Hiring their rooms for short periods only, it is very common to find the poor tenants moving from place to place, every few weeks. By this practice, they avoid the trouble of cleansing their rooms, as they can leave behind them the dirt which they have made. The same room, being occupied in rapid succession by tenant after tenant, it will easily be seen how the walls and windows will become broken, the doors and floors injured, the chimnies filled with soot, the whole premises populated thickly with vermin, the stairs (common passage of several families) the receptacle of all things noxious, and whatever of self-respect the family might have had, be crushed under pressure of the degrading circumstances by which they are surrounded."—*Griscom's Address before the American Institute.*

their sure and destructive effects.* In tracing the statistics of mortality, by a table which accompanies the report of the city inspector for 1856, exhibiting the bills during fifty-two years back, I have found that, out of the total of typhus fever deaths during that period, (10,418,) only 3,104 occurred in the first thirty-two years, and 7,314, (or 1,100 more than double) in the remaining twenty years; and, in addition to the last figures, 1,680 cases of malignant typhoid fever have occurred within the last score of years, while not a single case was reported previously; suggesting, certainly, a fearful increase of the disease and a worse type, arising from the known causes of over population, filth and miasma. And, doubtless, if the primary evil is permitted to widen without check, we shall find the typhus and remittent fevers merging in a firmly-seated and endemic fever, with some new name, but quite as infectious and fatal as yellow fever itself.†

* The following table of mortality, prepared in reference to typhus fever, exhibits the effect of crowding in bad neighborhoods; by presenting the number of square yards of space to each person, in three groups of metropolitan districts, in connection with the deaths in each:

Group of ten districts.	Square yards to each person.	Annual mortality.	Mortality from typhus alone.
1st district,.....	35	3,428	349
2d do	119	2,786	181
3d do	180	2,289	131

Showing that typhus is nearly three times as fatal in the first, or *crowded* group, as it is in the third, or open one.

† Dr. Joseph M. Smith, in a report upon public hygiene, made to the American Medical Association in 1850, entered into curious calculations concerning the effect of personal filthiness in creating typhus and other fevers. He said: "Let us suppose a family, one, of which there are hundreds of examples, consisting of ten adult persons, dwelling in a small, ill-ventilated house, and negligent of personal and domestic cleanliness; and further, that the time severally passed within doors by the ten individuals, some of whom are constantly at home, while others are temporarily absent, amounts in the aggregate to twelve hours out of every twenty-four. The mass of effete matters thrown out by the lungs and skin, by such a family within their dwelling in one month is 500 lbs., in six months 3033 lbs. 4 oz., and in one year 6083 lbs. 4 oz. Though by far the greater part of these excretions consist of carbonic acid, water, and salts, yet the *quantity of ejected animal matter* is not inconsiderable. It amounts in one month to 6 lbs. 3 oz.; in six months to 37 lbs. 11 oz.; and in one year to 76 lbs. 0 oz. 10 dwt. In such circumstances it is, and especially in seasons in which the prevalence of typhus is favored by an epidemic influence, that the disease often spontaneously originates in the squalid homes of the poor. * * The inhabitants of a densely populated town may be regarded as a single family, living in contiguous or narrowly separated apartments, any number or the whole of which may as certainly be rendered infectious by overcrowding, as the cells of a prison. In no mode, perhaps, can the danger from this source of disease be so distinctly impressed on the mind as by estimating the quantity of waste matters eliminated from the bodies of the people of a city in given times. If we assume as a numeral basis a population equal to 200,000 adults, it will be found, if calculated as in former examples, that the entire pulmonary and cutaneous egesta amount in one month to 20,000,000 lbs.; in six months to 121,333,333 lbs. 4 oz.; and in one year to 243,333,333 lbs. 4 oz.: and that the *exhaled animal matter alone* amounts in the first of these periods to 250,000 lbs.; in the second to 1,516,666 lbs. 8 oz.; and in the third to 3,041,666 lbs. 8 oz. The health of a city depends in no small degree upon the distribution of the inhabitants over an area of sufficient extent to admit of the free ventilation of every dwelling. When such a distribution obtains, and attention is given to personal and domestic cleanliness, a population of 200,000, or any greater number, will be as secure against the invasion of typhus as are the inmates of a commodious, cleanly, and well-aired private dwelling. But populate a town as densely as are the alleys and courts of many cities, and the consequence will be that the whole population will feel the influence of an *idio-miasmatic* atmosphere, and disease be co-extensively produced."

WANT OF PLAN.

We have examined into the short-comings of tenant-houses in providing those essentials of life, air, water and purity; we may now glance briefly at the absence of any intelligent plan of accommodation in the construction of most of these dwellings for the poor.

It is not to be expected that palaces could or should be erected for the accommodation of the laboring classes, with all the luxuries enjoyed by their wealthy and refined fellow-citizens; but it may, at least, be stipulated, that if they want the necessary and common comforts of house-dwelling, and are willing to pay a compensating price for such, they ought to have them, if possible, placed within their reach.* That proper houses can be built and sub-rented to poor tenants at the prices they now pay for holes and dens, is a fact which has been demonstrated by the evidence of landlords and builders who have testified before this Committee.† That they should be provided is a necessity of humanity, and a measure called for by a due regard to public health and security.‡ That they have not already been placed within compass of the industrious, virtuous and suffering poor (now forced to herd with the vile and lazy) is partly owing to the parsimony,

* Alderman Tucker, (of the 8th ward, New-York,) a practical builder, in appearing before the committee, said, there were many and serious objections to the present plan of tenant-house building. They cover too much of the lot; are built too high (6 and often 7 stories); the passages for ingress and egress are too contracted (3 feet being the average width, while they never ought to be less than 5 or 6 feet). No ceiling ought to be less than 9 or 9½ feet high. A house of 25 feet front, never ought to exceed 22 feet in depth, nor be over 3 stories high; hollow square buildings is a good mode. The present tenant-house system makes dangerous localities, and is a public nuisance. Yet many owners get 15 per cent interest over the cost of their building, allowing deduction of taxes, agents, etc. Alderman T. considered these houses a disgrace to the age. He would not himself take a deed of any one of them as a gift, if coupled with the condition that he should let them as they are now. He was satisfied that, if any subject called for the action of the Legislature, it is this.—*Minutes of the Investigating Committee.*

† Ex-Alderman Blunt submitted a set of plans for tenant houses: three houses to be built on two blocks, giving fifty feet frontage, a depth of fifty feet, and to be four stories high; walls to be eight inches thick, forty feet high, and *well built*; lower story of each to be let as a shop, at $12 per month rent; the two next floors at $10 respectively; the fourth at $8; making yearly rental $480, or $1.440 for the three; value of the ground estimated at the price usual in the localities of tenant houses. Mr. Blunt considered such buildings a good investment of capital. For a house affording tenant accommodations at cheaper rates, he recommended a five story building, twelve inch wall, twenty-five feet frontage, eight feet depth, twelve rooms on a floor, accommodating four families with three rooms each, ventilated at the sides.—*Minutes of Investigation.*

‡ Mr. Thomas Phillips said that he had built for himself and others a large number of houses of various plans. From long experience in building, and careful study of the wants of tenants, he had made up his mind that, in a sanitary point of view, no rear buildings should ever be erected. It was totally impossible to keep the back yards and alley connected with such, clear of nuisances. Not less than two rooms should ever be allotted to a family. Halls should be from four to six feet wide at entrance, and seven or eight where the stairs are; ceilings should be eight or nine feet in height, and a ventilator opening from each room, near the ceiling, to the hall. A skylight should be over the staircase. Cellars ought to be spacious, and never occupied for dwelling purposes. A man should be kept in each house to see that order and cleanliness are preserved.—*Minutes of Investigation.*

avarice or ignorance of capitalists, but mostly to the lethargy of the public and those in authority, in reference to the vital urgency of action in the matter.*

Plans, therefore, based on an observance of the important interests developed, must enter primarily into the reform of our tenant-houses. The subject involves more than the mere details of architecture, for it lies at the bottom of health and good morals.

The Committee have satisfied themselves that houses affording proper accommodations and conveniences can be erected for the poorer classes; that the providing of such will be productive of incalculable good, in a moral as well as physical point; that investment of capital in the construction of these buildings would be attended with no risk, and would yield a good and permanent interest; that, finally, such building and providing of habitations for the poor is not only a measure of humanity, but of vital necessity to the public, and should be encouraged by legislation and all needful and fitting inducements.†

* Several parties appeared before the committee with complaints and suggestions. Mr. R. O. Stephens complained that a tenant house, of which he was the owner, was surrounded by other premises, rented for purposes of ill-fame, and that his tenants were annoyed in a variety of ways by the contiguity.

Mr. SHEA (of the committee) suggested that a good way to be rid of such annoyances, would be to buy the adjoining buildings, and convert them into respectable habitations.

Mr. Stephens was of opinion this might involve the purchase of a very extended area of the city. He said the occupants of his own houses did not keep their rooms clean, and insisted that no building occupied by the poorer classes could be maintained orderly, no matter how vigilant the landlord might be. He thought every landlord should have the power of a health officer on his own property. He made about *ten* per cent off his investment. Always gave his tenants five days notice to quit.

Mr. SAMUEL WEEKS stated, that he had owned, built, and had charge of for others, of tenant-houses, during thirty-two years; had at the present time ten regular tenant houses under supervision. The houses erected by himself were designed for tenants who earned from $6 to $10 per week. To such he charged $9 per month for sets of rooms. He was of opinion that *sub-letting* was the chief cause of crowding and filth.

Mr. SHEA: Cannot a landlord prevent sub-letting? Mr. Webb (a builder of thirty year experience,) answered this question. He said, that under present laws, it was impossible to guard against sub-letting. He urged that some ordinance should be passed providing for a prevention of this evil. Mr. Webb also submitted a plan for a tenant house, as follows, viz: lot 25 by 100 feet, with front and rear buildings; front house 30 feet deep; an interval of 40 feet between it and the rear building; the latter 27 feet deep, and 3 feet space left behind; each building to be 5 stories high; walls 12 inches thick; on each floor two families, each having a room and bedroom, the latter with windows. Such houses could be built for $6,000 each, exclusive of ground cost; the apartments to be rented at $5 and $6 per month.—*Minutes of Investigation.*

† Our experience, like that of the old cities of the Old World, is that the avarice of capitalists *renders governmental interference for the protection of the poor and unfortunate,* an ABSOLUTE NECESSITY! In all the avenues through which capital bears upon those who live daily upon what they daily earn, JUSTICE, with executive power, must stand with uncovered eyes, and watch over our interests, ere we are robbed of the conveniences to which industry and frugality give us rightful title. But of all the avenues through which avaricious selfishness reaches, and takes from the poor, there is not one in which its operations are so painfully manifest in populous cities, as landlordism. The landlord digs deep, and, from damp foundations, rears his feeble walls far up until they tremble. He measures the height of his ceilings by the shortest of the people, and by thin partitions divides the interior into as narrow spaces as the leanest carpenter can work in. Into these, THE POOR are permitted to squeeze, provided they can pay a rental which *should* afford them com-

The Committee have witnessed, in their explorations, much calculated to shock the sensibilities and pain the heart. They have looked upon poverty in its nakeness, vice in its depravity. It is, then, no theoretical data which they bring to the support of such recommendations for legislative action, as they feel called upon to make. Hard facts constitute the foundation for reasoning, and stern necessity paints the plain path of action. It will not do to smooth over or dally with the matter. Duty to ourselves, to our fellow-men, to posterity and to our Heavenly Father, demands prompt and determined legislation, and the creation of such remedies for existing evils, as wisdom may suggest and prudence apply. The measures introduced in this report are the result of patient investigation and singleness of object in seeking the surest curative means. We shall hasten to present them, pausing only to dwell upon a class of tenants constituting the primary strata of poverty in the city; that unfortunate class whose condition, combining ignorance and destitution with alienism from the habits of those around them, appeals to the pity of more favored citizens. These people are the

IMMIGRANT TENANTS.

That crime, in general, is on the increase in our community, is a melancholy fact, in spite of the prevalent taste for reading, the multiplication of means of education, and the continued efforts of christian philanthropy to improve the morals of the people. The notice of this alarming phase of our social life, as brought under special scrutiny in the course of these investigating labors, naturally suggests an inquiry into the actual causes producing such unhappy results. Intemperance, though accountant for much, is not the parent of all vice; destitution does not beget every variety of offence; ignorance cannot be charged as the author of such aggregate disorders; but it is likely that, in the combination of these impelling agencies, as allowed to gather strength and boldness, through municipal and popular neglect, may be discovered the foundation of a vast amount of sins against property, man and God. Where shall we look for the rankest development of this terrible combination, but in the hideous anomalies of civilization which are to be found in the tenant-house system?

fortable and convenient homes. Into these they have gone, in this city, for many years; and, badly ventilated, and totally without the accommodations necessary to a house, as many of them are, the inmates, losing self-respect, (as those who feel without the power of bettering their condition often do,) suffer their narrow apartments to become unclean, and the atmosphere within them unfit for the lungs of man or beast.—*N. Y. Daily Times, March* 28, 1856.

The political philanthropist, regarding such anomalies, must arrive at one primary conviction—that vice and crime are epidemic in their nature; their moral malaria spreading with as much certainty and deadly effect as does the most malignant type of contagious physical disease. The presence of crime or its incentives, the neighborhood of a vicious population, the frequency of felonious acts, whether punished or not, constitute active agencies for the increase of social corruption. First, probably, among the evils which undermine communities and ultimately destroy states, is the *lowering of the general standard of popular virtue*, by whatever means. In some countries this effect has been super-induced by the gradual decline of personal independence through the influence of tyranny, reducing the body of the people to servile thoughts and base habits, making of them hypocrites and dishonest, in a national point of view. Again, *popular degeneracy* has been brought about by physical causes, such as the overwhelming of a brave and virtuous nation by luxurious conquerors who, overrunning the former, corrupted them by example. And once more, popular virtue may suffer from the internal growth of elements calculated to make vice familiar to the community, or to nourish in its midst habits and associations detrimental to morals and foreign to decency. A clear lake, fed by a pure but small mountain-streamlet, cannot preserve its transparency and purity in seasons of heavy rains, for even its fount may become swollen and turbid through the action of disturbed elements. How, then, can such a lake be expected to remain untainted, if a thousand pools, collected in rank morasses, and the contents of a thousand common sewers, be allowed to discharge their corrupting streams into its bosom? Will its local integrity disinfect and cleanse its tributaries, or will they not both defile its clearness and corrupt its natural purity?

The great gulf stream, and the vast mouths of the Orinoco and Amazon rivers discolor the Atlantic for hundreds of miles after they mingle with its briny waters. What if these turbid streams should be discharged into our inland ocean, Lake Superior? Would not that lake become a seething caldron of unclean whirlpools?

How, then, if with the facilities provided for the introduction into our cities of the large and increasing foreign element, continually arriving at our seaports, there be established no adequate means of protecting the community against the disorderly

constituents which it invariably comprises? How, if, instead, we place at its disposal districts, localities, neighborhoods and dwellings, specially, as it were, adapted to the habits and associations of the most degraded of foreign paupers, enabling them at once to renew their familiarity with squalor, misery and vicious practices? Is it thus, and with such incentives to the continuance and perpetuation of their customary filthiness and improvidence, that we are to render these immigrants good and useful citizens? Is it in this wise that, as civilized and christian men, we should be prepared to receive the promiscuous immigration pouring into our communities? Rather, should we not, by wise laws, foreseeing safeguards, and watchful social vigilance, so hedge in the hurtful element, that it shall at once quietly yield to improving influences, become accustomed to salutary checks, and ultimately thankful for the humane provisions which at once educate its ignorance and protect the community from its errors? Of a surety, we must, as a people, *act* upon this foreign element, or it will act upon us. Like the vast Atlantic, we must decompose and cleanse the impurities which rush into our midst, or like the inland lake, we shall receive their poison into our whole national system. American *social virtue* has deteriorated, and is constantly in danger of vitiation, through the operation of influences connected with the influx of foreigners, without corresponding precautions to counteract them. Not politically is this assertion made, nor with reference to the position of the immigrant population as voters, but solely in their relation to one another and to our native citizens, as members of the body social and moral.

The investigating Committee has carried its researches to doors and apartments of lodging-houses, into which the immigrant first sets his foot on landing upon these shores. Witnessing the disembarkation of ship-loads, examining the ameliorating features of their reception, as instituted by the municipal authorities at Castle Garden, we have traced the after phases of immigrant residence and habits through the lodging-houses, where extortion is practised, and in the tenant-houses, where a common level is reached. Whatever may be the estimate of individual means possessed by these people upon their arrival, however encouraging it may sound to hear that the average amount of cash in possession of immigrants is thirty or forty dollars per head, it is probable that the mass of them, settling in the city, are nearly, if not wholly, penniless. In fact, the impelling motive of their

emigration is necessity. Driven by the pressure of poverty at home to make a spasmodic effort for the bettering of their condition, they scrape together, through personal exertion or the aid of friends, a sum sufficient to defray the expense of a passage to America, including actual necessaries of life during the voyage. They cannot, as a general rule, make provision for aught beyond the bare exigencies; consequently they become subjected to exposure, hardship, deprivation and sickness; and when these do not terminate in pestilence and death at sea, the poor creatures are cast upon our shores, worn with suffering, and destitute of means wherewith to begin life in a strange land.

What may be known of their immediate fate is revealed partially in the reports of our alms commissioners and pauper hospitals. Other data may be gleaned in the pest-breeding lodging-houses, which fleece the immigrants of their last ragged scraps of clothing, in payment for a few weeks' beggarly fare. But the most important phases of immigrant misfortune must be sought in crowded shanties and tenant-houses, where newly arrived shiploads are quartered upon already domiciled "cousins," to share their "bit and sup," until such time as "luck" may turn up, or the entire colony go to the poor-house, or be carried off by fever or small pox.

Such, in a suggestive general view, is the condition of a great bulk of the foreigners daily landed at our wharves. What an American emigrant, finding himself in their situation, in a strange land, might attempt to do, cannot be known; he might conquer circumstances, or he might succumb to them. But these poor strangers, these immigrants, have none of the American element in them, whatever it may be; they are destitute, dispirited, sick, ignorant, abject. They demand immediate food, garb, shelter, and not only immediate but permanent means of obtaining these necessaries. But private charity doles its pittance, public almonry its degrading support, and labor, badly paid, fills up between. The male immigrant digs, while he can dig, the female nurses her squalid offspring, and ekes out a scant subsistence by the wash-tub. The sturdy young man, perhaps, may be able to start off on vigorous legs, to seek employment in the country; the young woman may find work as a domestic, if she be of more than ordinary intelligence, and can talk so as to be understood. But the men of families or feeble widows with three or four children, are forced to remain in the neighborhood of the landing-

place, because absolutely unable to move away from it; and here they presently subside, and are lost to view in the great multitude, but still peopling the ranks of pauperism in lanes, alleys, and by-places of the city. They swarm in filthy localities, engendering disease, and enduring every species of suffering; they become known at "corner groceries," where they expend their few pennies, or pawn their miserable rags, for bread and vile liquor; and, finally, sinking by sure degrees deeper in the scale of human beings, they often become habitual sots, diseased and reckless, living precariously, considering themselves outcasts, and careless of any change in their condition. At this point they begin to operate, by example and precept, in forming the future character of their wretched offspring. Here commence lessons in beggary, imposture, theft, and licentiousness, which the young misery-sharpened mind soon "sets in a note-book, learns and cons by rote," until the unhappy victims of their parents' misfortunes and errors, graduate in every kind of vice known in that curious school which trains them—the public street. Homes—in the better sense—they never know.*

Here, then, among the multitudes crowding the tenant-houses of our great city, are discoverable the presence and the cause, in no small degree, of destitution and vice. Here, in the tenant-house, exist the pauper and criminal population, from whose ranks are recruited the "dangerous classes" that become thieves, bullies, murderers, and law-breakers of every kind. Here, in the midst of our churches, encompassed by our civilization, is the terrible moral malaria which constantly densifies, day by day becoming more potently charged with the virus of disease. Here, around and in tenant-houses, breed the brutalized appetites, the reckless sensuality, the God-defying despair, that break out at

* Their homes! That cold and damp cellar, about as tennatable as your coal vault. Do you call that a home for the distressed body, crowded in one corner there, swollen with the pains of rheumatism? Or that close apartment, heated to stifling in preparing the evening meal on the shattered stove—that suffocating room, where you would not stop within for a moment—is that the home which you think so favorable for the worn asthmatic, catching every breath as if his last? Or yon closet, some ten feet square, in the attic of one of these "poor-houses," which the considerate charity of landlords lets out at rates so convenient to tenants—that narrow, crazy shelter, where the rain through the ill-made roof drops in upon the scanty bed, which a family of children are sharing with their consumptive mother—perhaps that is the comfortable home, there is the genial atmosphere, in which the patient may manage, with tolerable ease, to cough her life away, if only kind ladies will visit her, and the good minister come now and then to pray with her. Ask any clergyman—he will tell you with how little satisfaction he makes his visits among the poor—when they are laboring under disease—how he scarce has the heart to speak of comfort for the soul, when the discomforts of the body call so loudly for relief, and for which the scanty aid he can minister seems akin to mockery—"be ye warmed, be ye filled." He prays for the recovery of his—parishioner—shall I say? I am sure he is afraid to think of the relation. He prays God to restore the invalid—that is to work a miracle, since he leaves him in a condition much more likely to make a well man sick than a sick man well.—*Rev. W. A. Muhlenberg.*

times into appalling excesses against society and humanity.* Here, in narrow courts and lanes, riots the contagion of bad example, which not only destroys those within its immediate circle, but influences to their degradation natures apparently far removed; for there is a subtle emanation from moral as well as physical disease, that has power to penetrate afar, and injure by the very *presence* of its noxious existence.

If we would, as a State or community, effect any thing tending toward the cleansing of these Pontine marshes of our city ; if we would accomplish aught to the purification of our social life—we should at once resolve on measures which shall lay hold of the wants and necessities of the poor and degraded—the inhabitants, adults and children of tenant-houses—and open to them, as soon as possible, better means and manner of living. To do this, we must constitute special and peculiar agencies. It will not do to leave the "sores" of our city without curative applications. It will not do to tamper with evils staring us in the face. We must *legislate*, and we must ACT.

It is with the deepest conviction of the importance of the wants calling for notice, with the liveliest sense of our own duty, and the duty of the State and society at large, that I offer, in this connection, a bill embodying remedies for special grievances, and provisions for a general supervision of the great subject involved in our investigations. Leaving with the Legislature of the State the results of our researches, let us recommend prompt and definite action upon the propositions submitted.

When, at the close of this report, we repeat what there has been occasion to advert to frequently, that in the tenant-house system are embodied many, if not the greater portion of the evils, which lie at the base of social disorder; when, moreover, we reiterate that, in this very tenant-house system, involving as it does the dwellings, surroundings, occupations, privations, habits, morals and mind of the poorer part of our fellow citizens, there exists the proper and well defined field of reformatory endeavor; it must be evident at once, to the political economist and christian reformer, that the State owes it, both to itself and posterity, to institute immediately such measures as shall check disorder, vice and disease; ameliorate hardships, encourage improvement,

* "The experiment has been long tried on a large scale, with a dreadful success, affording the demonstration that, if from early infancy, you allow human beings to *live* like brutes, you can degrade them down to their level, leaving them scarcely more intellect, and no feelings and affections proper to human hearts."—*Reports of the Health of British Towns.*

and afford protection to every effort toward the well being of our own generation, and that which, for good or evil, is about to tread in our footsteps.

The passage of the bill providing for a Board of Commissioners who shall, by their supervision of tenant houses, have charge of the incipient pauperism of our city, will be attended with results affecting the self-interest of every tax-payer. State appropriations, municipal support and private contributions, are now insufficient to provide for the host of paupers that appeals annually to our benevolence. But if this host be met on the threshold of its destitution, ere it becomes a public charge—if it can there be encouraged in industry and protected from extortion, tyranny and the temptation of vice, the effect must be to diminish the manufacture of adult and youthful paupers, and thereby save, ultimately, thousands and hundreds of thousands of dollars of public money, now expended in supporting beggary or punishing crime.

The tenant-house, I conclude and asseverate, is the legitimate point at which to commence the positive work of social reform, and with an earnest hope that the Legislature shall at once inaugurate that work, I respectfully submit this report to the Tenant-House Committee, together with the accompanying bill.

A. J. H. DUGANNE,
Secretary and Sub-Committee.

To the Committee to inquire into the Condition of Tenant-Houses.

In pursuance of a resolution adopted at the previous adjourned meeting, the Tenant-house Investigating Committee convened in January, 1857, at the office of the City Inspector, in New-York, (present Messrs. Reed, Brevoort and Duganne;) when, on motion, the report of the Secretary, with accompanying bill, was received and adopted for presentation to the Legislature; then the committee adjourned *sine die*.

JOHN M. REED,
A. J. H. DUGANNE,
WM. J. SHEA,
ELI CURTIS,
SAM. BREVOORT,
Committee of Investigation.

January, 1857.

APPENDIX.

A report of the number of tenant-houses in the various wards of the cities of New-York and Brooklyn respectively would have accompanied this, had it been considered necessary for the further elucidation of the matter; but, as the addition would have extended this paper to a much greater length, it is thought better to omit it. Taking, however, the complete recapitulation of the tenant-houses, &c., of the Seventeenth ward and Fourth, we shall approximate to an average of the whole. In the first-named ward the number of tenant-houses is 1,257; number of families, 10,123; number of rooms, 20,917; number of adult occupants, 35,954; number of children, 15,228; average number of persons to each house, 31½; number of rear buildings, 426. In this ward the lowest number of families to a house is four, highest, forty-five. In the Fourth ward, out of 1,139 houses, 452 are occupied as tenant-houses; number of families in each ranging from 4 to 94. The space of ground comprised in this ward being small, and the population dense, every possibly disposable part is occupied for building purposes.